GLIMPSES OF ANCIENT LEICESTER

M.S.C.

JOHNSON, Mrs. J. H.

Glimpses of Ancient Leicester

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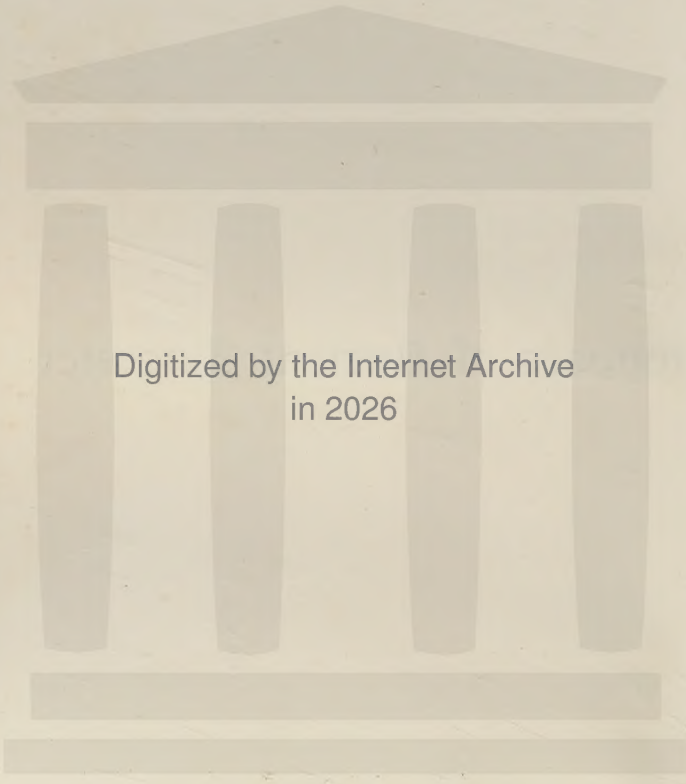
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Glimpses

of

Ancient Leicester,

in Six Periods.

BY MRS. T. FIELDING JOHNSON.

Second Edition, with Supplementary Notes.

LEICESTER:
CLARKE AND SATCHELL, GALLOWTREE GATE.
LONDON:
SIMPKIN, MARSHALL, HAMILTON, KENT & Co., LIMITED.
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I. Roman Leicester.

II. Leicester under the Anglo-Saxons and Danes.

III. Leicester under its Norman and Plantagenet Earls.

IV. Leicester in the Sixteenth Century.

V. The Siege of Leicester.

VI. Leicester at the End of the Eighteenth Century.

Supplementary Notes.

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS.

PAGE.

THE JEWRY WALL. From a photograph by J. Burton 11

ROMAN POTTERY. From a drawing by Miss E. S. Paget 19

THE ROMAN MILESTONE. From a drawing by J. Flower.. .. 25

SAXON WINDOW IN ST. NICHOLAS' CHURCH. From a drawing by Mrs. Joseph F. Johnson 34

THE MOUNT AND ST. MARY'S CHURCH. From a photograph .. 48

INTERIOR OF ST. MARY'S CHURCH. From a drawing by Miss E. S. Paget 49

SEDILIA IN ST. MARY'S CHANCEL. From a photograph by J. Burton 51

THE OLD WEST BRIDGE. From an old lithograph. Mrs. Joseph F. Johnson 53

FRAGMENT OF ABBEY WALL. From a photograph 53

NICHE IN THE ABBEY WALL. From a drawing by Miss E. S. Paget 60

ABBEY WALL. From a drawing by Miss E. S. Paget 62

THE MAGAZINE OR NEWARKE GATEWAY. From a photograph .. 84

TRINITY HOSPITAL (original). Photographed from a plate in Nichols' History 85

TRINITY HOSPITAL, as altered in 1790. From a photograph .. 86

UPPER FLOOR IN TRINITY HOSPITAL. From a drawing by Miss E. S. Paget 87

GROUND FLOOR IN TRINITY HOSPITAL. From a drawing by Miss E. S. Paget 89

NEWARKE GATEWAY (from the west). Photograph by H. Pickering 108

ST. MARY'S CHURCH (south aisle). Photograph by H. Pickering.. 115

OLD BUILDING IN HIGHCROSS STREET. Photograph by J. Burton 119

INTERIOR OF ST. NICHOLAS' CHURCH. Photograph by H. Pickering 121

ST. MARGARET'S TOWER. Photograph by J. Burton 123

PORCH, ST MARGARET'S. From a drawing by Mrs. Joseph F. Johnson 124

TOWN LIBRARY. From a photograph by J. Burton 127

ST. MARY'S CHURCH. From a photograph by J. Burton 131

CASTLE HOUSE AND TUDOR GATEWAY. From a photograph owned by Messrs. J. and T. Spencer 134

FONT IN ALL SAINTS' CHURCH. Photograph by H. Pickering .. 137
THE "PARLIAMENT" HOUSE. From a drawing by Miss E. S. Paget 142
THE BLUE BOAR INN. From an old drawing 147
WIGSTON'S HOSPITAL CHAPEL. From a photograph by J. Burton 150
WIGSTON'S HOSPITAL, UPPER FLOOR. From a drawing by Miss E. S. Paget 151
WIGSTON'S CHANTRY HOUSE. From a drawing by Mrs. Joseph F. Johnson 153
THE RUINED CAVENDISH MANSION. Photograph by J. Burton .. 162
THE "PORTER'S LODGE." From a drawing by Miss E. S. Paget .. 166
REMNANT OF "LORD'S PLACE." From a drawing by Miss E. S. Paget 168
THE FREE GRAMMAR SCHOOL. From a drawing by Mrs. Joseph F. Johnson 173
FIREPLACE IN THE MAYOR'S PARLOUR. From a photograph .. 176
INTERIOR OF THE OLD TOWN HALL. From a drawing by Mrs. Joseph F. Johnson 177
THE TOWN LIBRARY (exterior). From a photograph by J. Burton 179
" " " From a photograph by J. Burton 187
OLD HOUSES IN APPLEGATE STREET. From a drawing by Mrs. Joseph F. Johnson 200
TOWN HALL LANE AND ST. MARTIN'S. From a drawing by Mrs. Joseph F. Johnson 201
MAYOR'S PARLOUR. From a photograph by J. Burton 219
PORCH OF THE "NAG'S HEAD" INN. From a drawing by J. Flower 243
HOUSE IN WHICH BUNYAN AND WESLEY WERE LODGED. From a drawing by Mrs. Joseph F. Johnson 249
NEW STREET AND ST. MARTIN'S. From a drawing by Miss E. S. Paget 253
THE NEWARKE GATEWAY 1835. From a drawing by J. Flower .. 261
ST. MARTIN'S CHURCH (nave and chancel). Photograph by H. Pickering 265
TURRET GATEWAY. From a drawing by Miss E. S. Paget .. 268
THE LAST HIGH CROSS IN LEICESTER. From a drawing by Miss E. S. Paget 273
THE "BOW BRIDGE" OF THE AUGUSTINE PRIORY. From a plate in Nichols' History 275
SHAMBLES LANE (now St. Nicholas' Street) 1830. J. Flower .. 277

THE TOWER ARCH IN ALL SAINTS' CHURCH. Photograph by H. Pickering 278
ALL SAINTS' CHURCH, 1884. Miss E. S. Paget 279
"PAYNE'S," HIGH STREET. Miss E. S. Paget 288
LEICESTER MARKET PLACE IN THE 18TH CENTURY. From an old print in the possession of Mr. C. Oldershaw 309
TRINITY HOSPITAL CHAPEL. From a photograph 319
ST. MARGARET'S CHURCH (from the north-east). Photograph by H. Pickering 342
ST. MARTIN'S CHURCH (south-west). Photograph by H. Pickering 347
ST. MARGARET'S CHURCH (south-east). From a photograph .. 355
GATEWAY (north), FROM CASTLE YARD. Miss E. S. Paget .. 359
ST. MARGARET'S CHURCH (nave and chancel). Photograph by H. Pickering 361
WESTCOTES. From an old water-colour drawing 366
THE OLD TOWN HALL (west end). Photograph by J. Burton .. 375
THE MAYOR'S PARLOUR. From a water-colour drawing by Miss E. Gittins 379
FIGURES OF CHARITY BOY AND GIRL. From a photograph .. 384
SOUTHGATE STREET, "THE CONFRATERY." From a drawing by J. Flower 390
THE GENERAL NEWS ROOM. Photograph by J. Burton 398
CANAL AND WEST BRIDGE. Photograph by J. Burton 407
LEICESTER MARKET PLACE IN 1840. From an engraving .. 409
EXTERIOR OF MAYOR'S PARLOUR. Photograph by J. Burton .. 423

PREFACE.

In venturing on the bold step of offering to the Public this little volume on Ancient Leicester, I wish it to be distinctly understood that it has no claim whatever to any originality arising from independent research among historical documents or the Town Records, nor even to more than a superficial acquaintance with the subject. I have simply gathered and arranged, in as concise and continuous a form as I have been able, the leading facts connected with the history, condition and development of our town, as described in existing local works; especially in those of the late Mr. James Thompson, whose *History of Leicester* presents the subject in so admirable and interesting a manner.

I have long felt, however, that it would be desirable, if possible, to represent in an abbreviated and perhaps more popular form, certain periods and episodes in the life of the ancient town, with the purpose of stimulating a more general interest in this subject,—so ready to our hands, but at the present time, as it seems to me, so much undervalued by the inhabitants of busy modern Leicester. Most of our young people are completely ignorant of the history of their native town; and among the multitude of fresh dwellers in our midst, many,—probably the greater number,—are by no means aware how much of interest is contained in the past history of the Borough of Leicester. It is to these especially, as well as to that other great body of townspeople who

have never given much thought to the matter, that I now address this little work, in the hope of kindling a spark, be it ever so small, of appreciation and romance around some of those too little heeded historical landmarks in the streets of our town, which I lament to say, are fast meaning even less and less to its ever increasing population.

As contributing towards this end, I cannot sufficiently express my thanks for the valuable help afforded by the Illustrations, which have for the most part been reproduced from drawings made for the purpose by Mrs. Joseph F. Johnson (Patty Townsend), of Nuneaton, and by my sister, Miss E. S. Paget, of Leicester.

Most of the details of the Siege in 1645, as well as the Map showing the disposition of the attacking forces, have been taken from a published Paper read before the Leicester Mechanics' Institute in the year 1839, by the late Mr. James Francis Hollings, whose researches among certain records in the British Museum supplied him with the facts relating to that eventful period. The outer line of defence, he admits, is to some extent conjectural, as the earthworks were destroyed not very long afterwards, to accommodate the needs of the extending town, but he affirms that their general accuracy is amply supported by various points of reliable evidence.

I must also explain that in the following pages I have so mingled and incorporated with my own words the already familiar descriptions of local authors, that I have not attempted the task of giving chapter and verse for the facts related; but, as the whole has been submitted to the criticism and correction of one of our best known resident antiquarians, I can claim to have advanced nothing which has

not received the sanction of a high authority. It therefore only remains for me to subjoin a list of the works and pamphlets from which my matter has been mainly obtained, and to offer my sincere thanks to those local archæologists and other friends who have given me valuable information in a written or a verbal form.

AGNES JOHNSON.

Brookfield, Leicester,
November, 1891.

PREFACE TO THE SECOND EDITION.

To meet the wishes of friends, I have added a slight supplementary sketch to the previous "Glimpses of Ancient Leicester," so as to connect the historical chain of local events and conditions more closely with the present day;—events and conditions more or less familiar to our minds from the memories related by our fathers, if not recalled by ourselves. It seems fitting that an attempt should be made to preserve a few features of the developing life of Leicester during the first half of the nineteenth century, and that our grateful acknowledgements should also be made to those citizens whose work local history has not yet recorded, but who loved their town and wrought good in it, in their day and generation; and in the case of some of these the colour, so to speak, of personal recollection adds interest and pleasure to the task of recalling the events with which they were connected.

It should be borne in mind, however, that this sketch is necessarily incomplete, and aims at nothing more than a glance, here and there, at byegone days and ways, and at certain episodes which have proved of importance to the community, and are of personal interest to myself and others. I have endeavoured, as far as possible, to preserve a chronological sequence; but in tracing the history of various local families and institutions, some overlapping of periods has been unavoidable. If, among the names recorded, some are missing of which mention should justly have been made, I sincerely regret the omission; and I wish it to be clearly understood that no personal reason or prejudice whatever has guided my choice in what, I am well aware, is a somewhat delicate undertaking.

My grateful acknowledgements must be made to the many friends who have helped me by supplementing the information gained from public sources; and to the Proprietor of the Leicester *Advertiser* I am especially indebted for his kindness and courtesy in giving me free access to the past volumes of the former Leicester *Journal*, which have supplied so much of interest in the following pages. To Mr. Henry Nicholson's goodwill and personal trouble are owing much information connected not only with his own remarkable family record, but also with several former places of amusement in Leicester, and other valuable facts with which he has supplied me. Mr. R. Rowe has also kindly furnished items of interest relating to the history of Methodism in this town; and to Mr. C. Oldershaw I am much indebted for placing at my disposal a valuable old print of the Market Place in the eighteenth century, for reproduction in the volume. To Mr. Herne and Mr. Kirkby, the able Librarians

of the Permanent and Municipal Libraries, I also offer my sincere thanks for their courtesy and assistance.

The original of the valuable Map of Leicester in 1828 was formerly in the possession of Messrs. John and Thomas Spencer of the Market Place. As I am not aware of the existence of any other map of that date, I have thought it advisable to have it copied for reproduction, as showing the various windmills and water mills, and other vanished landmarks of interest.

AGNES JOHNSON.

Brookfield,
November, 1906.

LIST OF WORKS CONSULTED.

	Published	A.D.
Description of Leicestershire, by William Burton ..	,,	1632
History and Antiquities of the ancient Towne and once Citty of Leicester, MS., by Thomas Staveley ..	,,	1679
History and Antiquities of the Ancient Town of Leicester, by John Throsby	,,	1791
History and Antiquities of the County of Leicester, by John Nichols	1795 to	1815
A Walk through Leicester, by Miss Watts	,,	1795
Life of Cardinal Wolsey, by George Cavendish (Singer's Edition)	,,	1825
Literary and Miscellaneous Memoirs, by J. Cradock, Esq., M.A., F.S.A.	,,	1828
Topographical History of the County of Leicester, by the Rev. John Curtis	,,	1831
Music and Friends, by William Gardiner	,,	1838
History of Leicester during the Great Civil War, by James Francis Hollings	,,	1840
Leicester Directories of 1815, 1827, and 1849	,,	
Roman Leicester. (Paper read before the Literary and Philosophical Society), by James Francis Hollings..	,,	1851
Midland Counties Historical Collector	,,	1851
History of Leicester, from the time of the Romans to the end of the Seventeenth Century, by James Thompson	,,	1849
Handbook of Leicester, 1st Edition, by James Thompson	,,	
Handbook of Leicester, 3rd Edition, by James Thompson	,,	1859
Leicester Castle, by James Thompson	,,	1859
History of Leicester during the Eighteenth Century, by James Thompson	,,	1871
Pocket Edition of Thompson's History of Leicester, published by Frank Hewitt	,,	1876
Ancient Records of Leicester. (Paper read before the Literary and Philosophical Society), by William Kelly, F.S.A.	,,	1851

	Published A.D.
Notices of Leicester, by William Kelly	,, 1865
Royal Progresses and Visits to Leicester, by William Kelly	,, 1884
Our Town, and how it strikes a Stranger. (A series of Articles from the "Leicester New Monthly Magazine,") by William Napier Reeve	,, 1854
Chronicles of the Castle and of the Earls of Leicester, by William Napier Reeve	,, 1867
A Chronicle of the Church of S. Martin, by Thomas North	,, 1866
The Church Bells of Leicestershire, by Thomas North..	,, 1876
Leicester and Rutland, by William White	,, 1877
History of S. Nicholas' Church, Leicester, by Rev. T. W. Owen, Vicar	,, 1884
A Quarter of a Century's Liberalism in Leicester, by G. R. Searson	,, *circa* 1885
Notes on Roman Architectural Fragments found in Leicester. (Article contributed to the Journal of the Royal Archæological Institute), by G. S. Fox, F.S.A.	,, 1889
Notes and Queries, edited by John and Thomas Spencer	1889 to 1895
Notes on the Leicester and Swannington Railway, by Clement E. Stretton, C.E. (A lecture delivered at the Town Museum)	,, 1891
Historical Sketch of the Borough of Leicester, by John Storey..	,, 1895
Life of Sir Henry Halford, M.D., by W. Munk ..	,, 1895
Records of the Borough of Leicester, by Mary Bateson	,, 1899

NOTES.

(*a*) The fine old tree recorded as standing in the Market Place from the 16th to the early part of the 19th century, has scarcely been sufficiently localized. It grew near the upper end, above the present Market House, where, for several centuries, stood various important Inns, including the sign of the Green Dragon, and the still remaining one of the Bull's Head. In the following pages the tree has been separately mentioned as standing near each of these two Inns, which, though apparently misleading, is still strictly correct, as they occupied ground either side by side or closely adjoining about this spot.

(*b*) On page 238 the flight of Charles I. towards Leicester and Ashby, after the battle of Naseby, is incidentally referred to as along the line of the present London Road. It is, however, certain, that with the enemy in pursuit behind him, he would, after his hurried change of horse and saddle at Wistow, take the easiest and most direct northerly course possible, whether this led him across the open country or along the roads as they then existed. The victorious Parliamentary army under General Fairfax undoubtedly passed through Glenn and Oadby two days after the battle, as Mr. Hollings states that a despatch from Fairfax to the Parliament is dated June 16th from the latter place.

ERRATA.

(*c*) Page 397.—Owing to an oversight in revising the MS. an erroneous statement relating to the Workhouse in Sparkenhoe Street has been left uncorrected. The date of its erection was 1847. (*See* note on page 422).

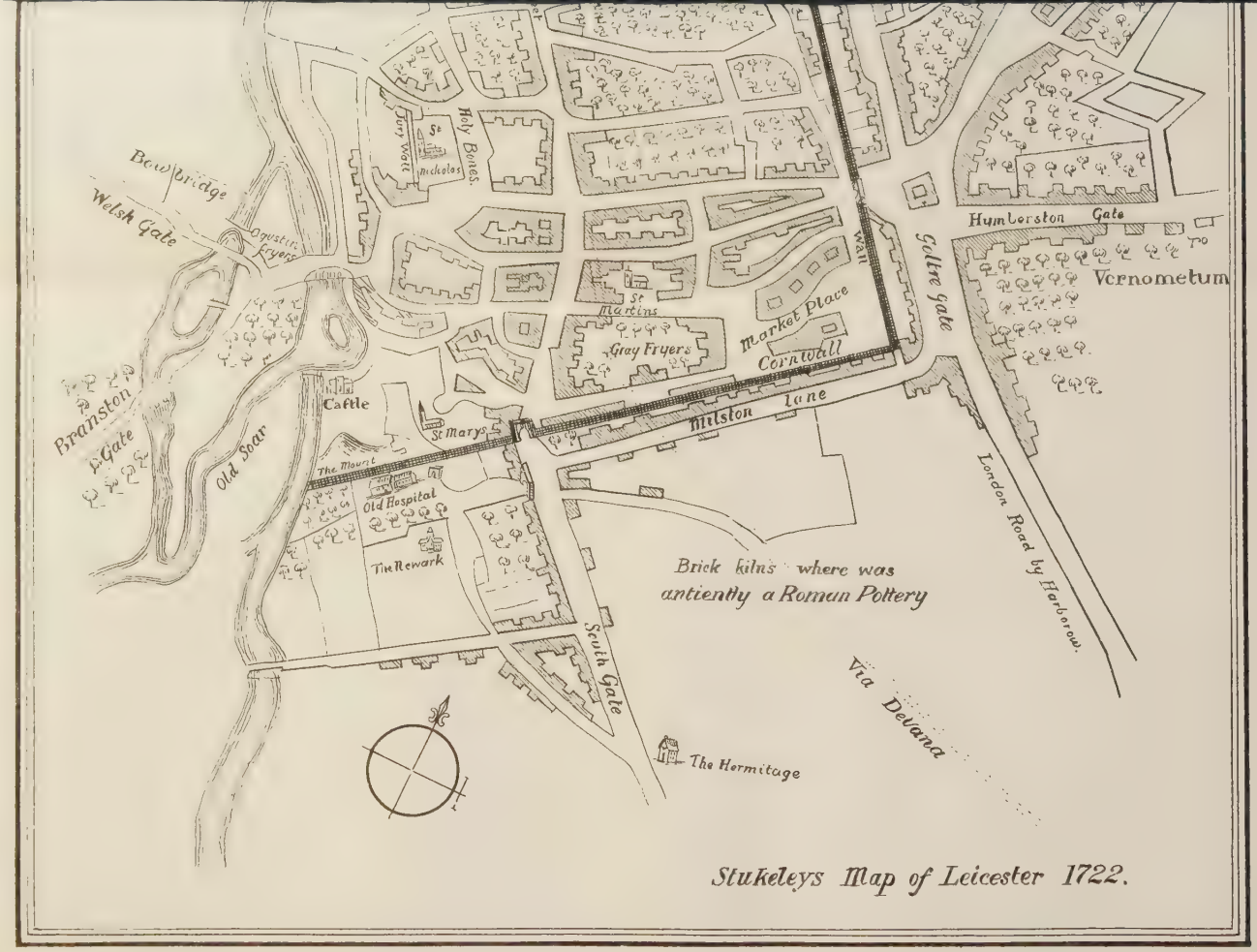
(*d*) On page 315, line 14.—For "Lobeide" read "Zobeide."

PART I.

Leicester during its Roman Period.

From about A.D. 50 to A.D. 450.

RATÆ. Coritanorum
8 Sep. 1722.
St Marys de pres Abby
continued via Devana
Abby Gate
Wood Gate
Soar R.
St Sundays Bridge.
500
1000
Feet.
Leicester
The Bath
North Gate
St Margarets
Senvy Gate
The Farm
Soar Lane
Dominican or Black fryers
All Saints
St Johns
The Track of the Roman
Belgrave Gate



Stukeleys Map of Leicester 1722.

PART I.

Leicester during its Roman Period.

From about A.D. 50 to A.D. 450.

CHAPTER I.

WHEN the Roman Prefects in Britain, during the middle of the first century of the Christian Era, could safely turn their attention for awhile from the well-established and prosperous imperial colonies in the southern parts of the island to penetrate with their conquering legions into the unexplored interior, certain well-made British tracks or roads along which they advanced through the dense forest then covering the central districts led them to a sunny opening in the valley of a winding river. Here upon a cleared and level space, and enclosed for defence by stout embankments of earth with outside trenches, was clustered a native Celtic settlement of straw-roofed huts, whose half savage inhabitants, with their blue-stained bodies and rude garments of skins had no choice but to succumb, after a brief but fierce struggle, to the trained and irresistible foe who was sweeping all before him.

Above the river, at a little distance on the north-east side, rose a gentle slope which to the practised eye of the Roman General suggested a good vantage-ground for occupation by his forces, whence the late enemy could be overlooked, and any subsequent attempt at a rising among them, or in other native settlements in the neighbourhood, might be promptly checked.

British Leicester.

This British encampment, on the spot where part of Leicester now stands, was called in the native Celtic tongue Caer-lerion, the city or camp of the Lœgrians, that branch of the Cymrian stock then inhabiting the Midlands, and so named from the river Lœgre or Ligur (afterwards Loire) in Gaul, whence they had long before immigrated into Britain.

The river that watered their green and fertile clearing was called the Leir, from the same source; and thus the ancient British name given to Leicester sometimes takes the form of Caer-Leir, or "the city by the Leir" (afterwards called the Soar).

Some local antiquarians consider that the ancient and artificial elevation known as "the Mount," in the grounds of Leicester Castle, was probably the fortress or stronghold of the original Lœgrian inhabitants, the word "Caer" apparently admitting of a very wide interpretation, as "walled mount," "camp," "castle," "city," or "fortress."

It must also be mentioned that the old mediæval chronicler, Geoffry of Monmouth, claims that Leicester was originally founded by the famous King Lear, as far back as B.C. 800, but as no other or less romantic historian endorses this opinion, and as no data appear to exist in justification of it, we may be content to adopt the more prosaic and reasonable derivation first given.

The Raw-Dykes.

Later on, a Celtic tribe called the "Coranied," advancing from the low and marshy lands near the delta of the Rhine, had invaded and settled in this Lœgrian or Midland district of Britain, mixing with and absorbing the older inhabitants. In their newer dialect the colony was called a "Rath," signifying an "enclosed space or fortress to dwell in." It is probable that remains of the British settlement which succumbed to the Roman forces on the spot now occupied by Leicester are yet to be traced in the mysterious line of mounds called the "Row" or "Rath" or "Raw" Dykes, still existing on the level meadow-land to the south-west of the town, near the Aylestone Road railway bridge, and bordering on the river. The lines of these ancient mounds formerly extended much nearer to the town, but the increase of houses and cultivated land in this direction has obliterated them. Some authorities, however, attribute these remains to a later Roman camp, or to a summer resort of the Legions during their long occupation of Leicester, and others again, to a British or Roman Cursus or Race-course.

St. John's Stone.

Another relic of our British ancestors hereabouts, traces of which are still to be seen, though neglected and known but to a few, was an upright monolith about seven feet high and three feet in the ground, standing in the circular sloping hollow of a field in the neighbourhood of Leicester Abbey, and which has from time immemorial borne the name of "S. John's Stone." When and how the stone was deposited on this spot must be left to geologists to determine, but there is little doubt that it entered into the mysterious Druidical rites celebrated in this probable place of worship or assembly in ancient British days. In later times it became a place of holiday resort on S. John's or Midsummer Day, whence its

name. Mr. W. Kelly, our learned local antiquarian, writing of this interesting stone, relates that Mr. Richard Harris (formerly Mayor and M.P. for this borough) once informed him that as a boy he frequently played on the spot, it being customary for children to go there and dance round the stone, or roll down the grassy slopes which encircled it. The young people, he added, were careful to leave the place before dark, as it was believed that at midnight the fairies assembled and danced there. Many years ago, however, on account of the annoyance to the proprietor from the numerous visitors, rough and gentle, who were attracted to the spot, the relic was levelled to the ground, and the present generation are mostly ignorant both of its former existence and of the significance attached to it. The stone is still to be seen a few inches above the earth, in the centre of a wide grassy hollow resembling an amphitheatre, and is pregnant with interest to all who love to dwell on the far-distant Past of their ancient town.

Other British encampments in the neighbourhood.

Mr. Frederick T. Mott, in an interesting contribution to the first number of "Notes and Queries," published by Messrs. J. & T. Spencer of Leicester, calls attention to an oblong arrangement of mounds of earth on the western slope of a hill on the Beaumont Leys estate which, he suggests, may have possibly been the site of an old British encampment; and there are remains at Ratby which point to a similar origin, —a theory which the name of this village or "Rath" in the Celtic tongue, strengthens. That there was more than one camp in the near neighbourhood of Leicester is certain, from the Romanized plural form of "Rath," "Ratæ," afterwards adopted by the Romans as the name for their new Station—"Ratæ Coritanorum."

State of civilization in Britain.

At the time of the first arrival of the Romans upon the shores of Britain the natives were variously civilized according to locality, the dwellers on the southern coasts who had some degree of intercourse with their Gallic neighbours across the Channel being far more advanced than those inhabiting the midland and northern districts. In the south, agriculture and some of the useful arts had long been practised, especially that of metal-working, as shown in the golden ring-shaped coins and the delicately fashioned personal ornaments in use among them. Their war chariots also were constructed with great mechanical skill, and show distinct traces of remote and almost prehistoric origin among those distant Asiatic peoples whence the first wave of Celtic immigration poured into the western continent of the Old World. The British roads, too, which intersected the island long before the Romans set foot upon it, testify to their constructive skill of a ruder sort; and these the Romans themselves were glad to adopt and improve for their own use, a fact which has given rise to the mistaken belief that most of the great roads through Britain were originally Roman. The Watling Street was formed on the line of an ancient British road, and so were the well-known Icknield Street and the Salt-way.

Planting of a Roman military camp on the site of Leicester A.D. 50.

It was about A.D. 50, in the reign of the Emperor Claudius, that the Roman Proprætor Ostorius Scapula penetrated with his legions into the central district of the Midlands, and after subduing the British settlement of Caer-lerion planted his military camp on the rising ground above the river Leir, where the oldest part of Leicester now stands.

The Roman Station was laid out in the oblong form usually adopted by these military colonists, and was nearly

two miles in circuit, the length of its sides from north to south measuring about 2,500 feet, and those from east to west about 2,000. Being at first a simple encampment, these defences were probably constructed only of mounds of earth with a trench beyond, and an opening on each of the sides for entrance. The soldiery pitched their tents inside the enclosure, and the General's quarters presumably occupied a prominent position near the centre. In accordance with custom, two main lines of road ran through the camp, dividing it into four districts, each of which was apportioned to its wonted occupants,—the cavalry in this quarter, the infantry here, the auxiliaries there, and so on,—the whole Station being large enough to contain from 12,000 to 20,000 men ; and the name given to it by the Romans, as already stated, was "Ratæ Coritanorum," the "camps of the Coritani," although it is probable that the native tribes may still have called it by its earlier name of Caer-leir or Caer-lerion.

Wise conciliation of the natives.

At first, the conquered people were awed into a sullen submission by the stern military rule of the Roman Generals, but as time went on, and more especially under the wise and firm government of the Proconsul Julius Agricola, who between A.D. 80 and 90 did much to consolidate the Roman power in Britain, they were encouraged to feel confidence in the good faith of their masters, and were gradually induced to mingle and trade with them ; by degrees also adopting the customs, language, and style of dress of the Romans, and learning many of their arts and handicrafts. Thus in the course of the four centuries of the Roman occupation of Britain, the native population became practically absorbed into that of their conquerors, certainly in and about their more important Stations.

The Station made a permanent one.

It was in the days of the good and wise Julius Agricola, not more than thirty years after their first arrival in this locality, that the Romans set to work to construct a permanent Station at Leicester or Ratæ on the lines of their existing encampment; and the earthen mounds of defence now speedily gave place to thick walls of stone, probably quarried from the neighbouring Dane Hills, mixed with small loose boulders collected in the valley of the river, and all cemented together by a means known only to these ingenious builders; while the dwellings, both of the Legions and civilian inhabitants, assumed a more solid and lasting character, and buildings of architectural importance gradually arose.

Lines of the walls.

The outline of the walls, closely followed by those of a later date, was as follows:—The north wall extended in a straight line a little inside the present Soar Lane and Sanvey Gate, from the river to the angle of Church Gate; the east wall ran inside the line of Church Gate and Gallowtree Gate to the angle of Horsefair Street; the south wall proceeded by Horsefair Street and Millstone Lane to a point in or near St. Mary's Churchyard, and the west wall, whose existence is somewhat problematical, completed the enclosure by passing from this point to the end of Soar Lane, whence we started.

Position of the gates.

Near the centre of each wall was an entrance gate, which on the north side probably stood on the spot always since identified with the North Gate, at the angle of Cumberland Street with Northgate Street. It is possible, however, that this gate in Roman times was situated a little further eastward along the line of Sanvey Gate. The South Gate is supposed to have stood about the centre of the present Millstone Lane, near Wiclif Street. The Gate in the east wall

was probably at a point further north than the present "East Gates," which represents the site of the mediæval entrance; and the Roman West Gate, like the Roman west wall, has always had a disputed existence, some authorities maintaining that Leicester was undefended on this side, as the river afforded sufficient protection, while others assert that a west wall undoubtedly ran parallel with the river, and that the mass of brickwork still existing behind St. Nicholas' Church, and called the "Jewry Wall," was once the Western Roman Gateway into the city. This conjecture would seem extremely probable, as the structure is in a direct line from the known Roman road which crossed the river below the town on or near the site of the present Bow Bridge, and after traversing Leicester, passed out at the East Gate. The theory of the existence of a western wall is further strengthened by the discoveries said to have been made from time to time of portions of wall-foundations in the direct line it would take from St. Mary's Churchyard to the river-end of Soar Lane, but it is difficult to substantiate these alleged proofs. The Jewry Wall fragment appears to have been the work of two distinct periods; the outer or western side, said to resemble the usual construction of Roman gateways, being of much earlier date than the inner or eastern face, which was afterwards built partly across the earlier arches. It is therefore quite possible that it originally formed the Western Gateway of the town, and that at some subsequent period of the Roman occupation it passed into disuse for this purpose, and was absorbed into some other public building, probably Baths or a Basilica, or both combined in one of the large and imposing structures devoted to several purposes which appear to have been not unusual in the Roman cities of

Disputed existence of a west wall.

The Jewry Wall.

Britain. While excavating near this spot for laying the foundations of a modern factory, the discovery of a large mass of masonry in which were embedded fragments of earthen pipes and flue-tiles, and also of a large sewer in the immediate neighbourhood, passing downwards to the river, both being of undoubted Roman construction, strengthens the supposition that a public Bath at one time existed at or near this place, the Romans chiefly employing hot air for bathing purposes in the manner of the modern Turkish bath, although water, both hot and cold, was also used.

THE JEWRY WALL.

CHAPTER II.

Ancient British and Roman roads.

THE Romans naturally placed their military stations on or near their main lines of communication which, as already mentioned, were in many instances adaptations of existing British roads. The Romans added to them their own peculiar stamp of directness—the straightness of its line being the main characteristic of a Roman road. The county of Leicester, from its central position, is peculiarly rich in these ancient routes, the present names for which were, mostly, not bestowed upon them until the time of the Saxons, or even later. Of these, the old British road utilized by the Romans, afterwards called the Watling Street, is perhaps the best known. It started from near Sandwich in Kent, and proceeded as far as Uriconium or Wroxeter, near Shrewsbury. Passing the south-west borders of our county, it still forms part of the boundary line between Leicestershire and Warwickshire, and is believed to have received its name from the wattles or laths of wood largely used in its construction.

The Watling Street.

The Foss Way.

The Foss Way or Via Fossata, so called in after times, was a Roman road which ran from Grimsby in Lincolnshire straight across the Midlands, and thence in a south-westerly direction past Cirencester and Bath, both important Roman

Stations, to the Devonshire coast at Seaton, near Exmouth. This road derived its name from the fosses or ditches on either side of it, and entered Leicester from the direction of Thurmaston, proceeding part of the way up Belgrave Gate, but probably turning off to the right near Abbey Street, and passing into the town by the Roman gate in the eastern wall at its conjectured point nearly opposite the end of Mansfield Street. It then took a straight course through the town, forming one of its principal streets; and having passed through the West Gate, it crossed the river at or near the present Bow Bridge, continuing in the line of King Richard's Road until it joined what is still called the "Foss Road," in front of Wigston's Hospital. It proceeded in a south-westerly direction by Narborough and not far from Sapcote, to the Roman Station of Venones, near Claybrook, where it crossed the Watling Street at or near the spot still called High Cross, and left the county.

Whether or not the Roman Foss Road actually passed through the town is, however, a matter of dispute among antiquarians, some affirming that it turned off near Thurmaston and proceeded by Birstall and Belgrave towards the Abbey, crossing the Ashby Road and skirting Leicester by the present New Found Pool until it reached the undisputed Roman Foss Way already mentioned. In this view of the case the road leading from the town across the river was only a "via vicinalis," as the tributary roads were called. But those who are of opinion that the line of the Foss Way ran through Leicester, deny that the road by New Found Pool had any existence whatever in Roman times, and attribute its construction to a much later date, probably for the purpose of avoiding the tolls at the town gates from travel-

lers or merchandise passing by Leicester to the Abbey or to other places in the Middle Ages.

The Via Devana or Gartree Road.

A third main route, now generally known as the Via Devana, but more properly by its local Saxon name of the "Gartree" Road or Street was made by the Romans as a means of communication between their Stations east and west at Colchester and Chester (Deva). This road entered Leicestershire from the south-east, near Rockingham, and may still be traced in parts of the lane leading thence by the villages of Little and Great Stretton (so named after the "street") to Stoughton Grange, whence it diverged across the present Evington fields and passed down the line of the New Walk to Leicester, entering the town, according to the best authorities, at the South Gate which stood, as we have seen, about the centre of Millstone Lane. It there formed the main street running northwards, taking a line somewhat to the east of the present Southgate Street, which was of later construction; and after crossing the Foss Road near the centre of the Station, in or about High Cross Street, it passed out by the North Gate. It then crossed the river, probably on the site of the North Bridge, and leaving the present "Woodgate" on the left, proceeded in a north-westerly direction, as the still existing "Old Anstey Lane," (also known as the "Continuation of the Via Devana,") passing behind Leicester Frith, and by Groby to Ashby and Burton-on-Trent, onward to Chester.

Again, authorities differ as to the line of this road by or through Leicester, one of the received opinions being that it did not enter the walls, but passed down the line of the London Road, Gallowtree Gate and Church Gate, and thence across the meadows and river towards Anstey and Groby,

as first mentioned; and if this conjecture be correct, that would be a "via vicinalis," only which branched off in a westerly direction at the top of the hill on the London Road, and by the line of the New Walk connected it with the South Gate of the town. The former, however, would seem to be the more probable conclusion.

The centre of the town.

The point of intersection of the two main streets of a Roman town naturally indicates its centre or nucleus, around which its business would mostly be carried on, and the chief buildings placed; and of Roman Leicester, accordingly, we find the most important remains in the neighbourhood of High Cross and St. Nicholas' Streets, near the junction of the Foss Way and the Via Devana, and reaching as far south as the site of St. Martin's Church.

It is impossible to avoid speculating, however vainly, on the probable amount of light that might be thrown upon this most interesting first chapter of our town's history, if from ten to twenty feet below the surface of the whole central area of Leicester could be systematically excavated; but as, apart from the action of time and weather, the greater portion of the ruined Roman masonry and material must, during the lapse of many centuries, have lost its identity in being used over and over again as a means of filling up inconspicuous parts of later structures, our curiosity must remain unsatisfied, save by occasional fragmentary upturnings, or by portions of objects exposed to view in situ by chance excavations.* This, indeed, only serves to stimulate our regret that so much has altogether vanished; but we

* It is surprising that during the late widening of High Street and St. Nicholas' Street and the excavations for buildings along the route, so few additional Roman remains have been brought to light.

must perforce content ourselves with these partial discoveries, and with exercising our imagination upon the precious relics which from time to time have been unearthed and preserved for the interest and contemplation of modern dwellers on this ancient site.

The Forum.

The Forum or Market Place, where the native Celtic people would soon learn to offer for sale their rude wares and country produce, side by side with the finer productions of Rome and the East stood, no doubt, near the spot known in after times as the High Cross, and was probably surrounded by a colonnade or covered way. Some authorities imagine it to have occupied the space enclosed between St. Nicholas' Street, High Cross Street, Blue Boar Lane, and the Holy Bones.

In close proximity to the Forum would stand the Prætorium or Governor's Residence and the Basilica or Court of Justice; while Baths, Temples, and other public buildings, and the private and official dwellings of the more important citizens would each lend their contribution to the dignity and beauty of this part of the town.

Discoveries on the site of St. Martin's Church.

It is disappointing, however, that we do not possess proofs of the absolute whereabouts of most of the public edifices of Roman Leicester, although unmistakeable traces of two Temples have been discovered on their respective sites. During the excavations for the rebuilding of the tower of St. Martin's Church in 1861, portions of thick wall-foundations were found, while on the north side of the Church, and close to the palisading of Town Hall Lane, was discovered another thick wall of rubble supporting a stone platform upon which stood the bases of two massive Doric columns about two feet in diameter. These probably formed part of a colonnade

having its frontage towards High Cross Street, and they have since been removed to the Town Museum. To complete the proofs that the remains were those of a Temple, a large number of the bones of sacrificial animals were also found on this spot.

Remains of a Temple near St. Nicholas' Church.

In the square of St. Nicholas too, eastwards of the church, large heaps of animal bones were long ago discovered, giving rise to the appellation of "Holy Bones" to this side of the square. This fact, together with that of portions of columns having been found on digging near the spot, and since placed in the churchyard, renders it almost certain that in Roman times an important Temple, probably dedicated to the God Janus, and which tradition has always associated with this locality, stood on the site of St. Nicholas' Church. One of the principal offices of this god being to protect the avenues and entrances into cities, it seems probable that the neighbouring massive wall and arches originally formed the Western gateway of the Roman city. The whole square of St. Nicholas was probably at one time covered with buildings, and the church, in its most ancient parts, is largely composed of Roman bricks and material corresponding to that used in the Jewry Wall, which renders it unique in interest as an ecclesiastical structure. Other imposing erections must also have stood in the line of St. Nicholas Street and High Street, bases of columns having been found near the Methodist Chapel in the former street, and at both corners of its junction with High Cross Street. It is somewhat remarkable that no definite traces either of an Amphitheatre or of a Circus should have come to light, for no Roman city of the size and importance of Ratæ would have been without these places of amusement. But a slight

and pathetic clue to their local existence has been afforded in the discovery of a fragment of Samian pottery, part of the rim of a bowl, in fact, with a hole pierced through for suspension round the neck, and on it certain rudely scratched letters indicating that it was the token or gift of Lucius the Gladiator to Verecunda Lydia, one of those waifs and strays of evidence which announce so little and yet convey so much to our ready interest and unchanging human sympathies. This unique relic was found in the year 1854, during excavations in Bath Lane.

Lucius the Gladiator.

We must also bear in mind that, apart from other causes, many changes would occur during the 400 years of Roman occupation. Old buildings would fall into decay, and their materials would become absorbed into new structures, or buried deep below the surface before tradition had fixed their various localities. This of course applies in a far greater degree to the transformations that would occur in the street architecture during the centuries that have elapsed since the Romans dwelt in Leicester. It is now certain that an immense quantity of material has during this period been actually destroyed or ground up by process of time, or otherwise disposed of;—this being the only reasonable solution of the fact that so few remains of Roman buildings have been recently unearthed in the deep excavations made along High Street and St. Nicholas Street for the widening of those thoroughfares.

The high degree of artistic skill possessed by the Roman dwellers in Leicester and applied in their domestic architecture is forcibly shown by the remarkable fragments of tesselated pavement discovered in various parts of the town, more especially by the splendid specimens now so advan-

tageously preserved under the arches of the Great Central Railway, and in the cellar of a shop opposite St. Nicholas' Church; relics which alone would render the town of Leicester in the highest degree interesting to the antiquarian. The Roman mosaics.

The large area in and about Leicester in which Roman remains have been found in the shape of fragments of pottery and glass of various styles and workmanship, beads,

ROMAN POTTERY.

ornaments and utensils, besides innumerable coins of many periods, is very remarkable and full of interest, as indicating the growth and prosperity of the colony as the conquering and conquered races gradually interningled and dwelt together. Scarcely could a street be named in any central

part of the town which has not contributed, at some time or other, its own valuable quota to the general store of interesting objects of this period; and scarcely an excavation of any depth or extent has been made here or in the suburbs, without the reasonable expectation of bringing to light additional proofs of the high civilization and artistic work of our Roman predecessors in Leicester.

The Cherry Orchard pavement.

That the Roman city in course of time spread some distance beyond the old walls of the Station on the south-west side is proved by the discoveries, some years since, in what was then called the "Cherry Orchard," near the upper end of the present King Richard's Road, formerly known as "Watts's Causeway." Here, while digging among the cherry-tree roots in 1783, part of a Roman tesselated floor was found, but covered up again and the position lost sight of, although a drawing of the pavement was made and preserved. In 1850 the Leicester Literary and Philosophical Society interested itself in the antiquities of the town, and resolved to search for the traditional mosaic. A party of the Council met at the Cherry Orchard, with the promise from Dr. Noble, the owner, living at Danet's Hall close by, that if it could be found and safely removed, he would present it to the Town Museum. After much consultation as to the best spot in which to excavate beneath this orchard of ten or twelve acres extent, the iron probe used as a preliminary guide encountered resistance at several points beneath the surface of a small area. On removing the earth a fine Roman pavement was found, but of altogether different pattern from that preserved in the drawing. This discovery greatly stimulated the interest of the searching party, but owing to the lateness of the season and the probability that

more yet remained to be found, it was agreed to abandon all further excavation until the following year. When Spring arrived, the Society having voted funds for the purpose, the investigation was proceeded with. Starting from the newly-found pavement, trenches were dug in several directions with a successful result; and gradually, amid the almost breathless interest of those engaged in the work, the site of an entire Roman villa was, room by room, laid bare. The floors were mostly covered with mosaics,—none, however, shewing the pattern of the particular pavement for which the search had been instituted until, when the plan of the villa lay almost entirely revealed, this was at last discovered, exact to the original drawing, in the floor of a terrace running along the whole of the front, at least 120 feet in length and 11 feet in width. The appearance of the long-lost mosaic was hailed with delight, followed by the mutual congratulation of the workers that their perseverance had led to so complete and interesting a result. The greatest precautions were now taken against any untoward accident or damage, and policemen guarded the spot day and night until, when the necessary arrangements had been completed for its safe transit, the finest portion of the pavement, *i.e.* the semi-circular mosaic now in the Museum Annexe, was triumphantly carted in a single piece through the streets of the town, to form one of the most beautiful and interesting objects in its storehouse of antiquities. Tesseræ, from some of the other floors of the villa, were also deposited in the Museum; and a plan of the whole was carefully made, and may at any time be seen in the Curator's room. The rest of the mosaics forming the floors of the Roman villa were abandoned to their fate, as it was impossible to transfer the

Discovery of the site of a Roman villa.

Removal of the pavement to the Museum.

whole to the Museum, and the site was too valuable to remain unoccupied.

Whether buried traces of similar Roman dwellings have ever existed on other sides of the town it is impossible to say, but it is scarcely probable, as the south-western side, with its slope to the river, would be the pleasantest and most natural direction in which the wealthier citizens would build their ornamental and luxurious residences. Remains of Roman pottery and glass cinerary vessels have been found, however, in a north-easterly direction as far as the site of the Abbey; while beyond the river banks in the Braunstone Gate, and near the Branch Free Library beyond, they frequently occur, proving the extent of the suburbs in both these directions.

Extension of the Roman town beyond the walls.

The Roman walls, indeed, were unlike the later mediæval ones in this respect, that they were orginally built to protect the garrison from the conquered and more or less disaffected natives instead, like those erected in the Middle Ages, of being intended to keep at bay an outward and occasional foe. But, later on, mutual goodwill and confidence having rendered these defences less necessary as a protection to the Roman soldiery and citizens, we have reason to suppose that the villas of the latter scattered themselves by degrees over the face of the western declivity outside the walls; and for a spectator looking towards the town from the opposite side of the river below the West Bridge it is yet possible, even amid the prosaic and unlovely surroundings of to-day, to conjure up a picture of stately and ornamental buildings whose wooded gardens sloped down to the clear stream, commanding a view of the more distant suburbs which stretched westwards over the gently rising ground as far as the borders

of the forest that still surrounded the town. Outside the south wall near the present Newarke Street the discovery of a number of human bones has led to the conclusion that this spot was a burial ground in the Roman period, though the presence of glass cinerary urns in all parts of the town indicates the custom of private burial also. A brick or pottery field is believed to have existed in some part of the district between the present London and Welford Roads, where many of the plain but beautifully-shaped amphoræ and other vessels commonly in use were probably fashioned. The choicer Samian ware, with its fine colour and surface and delicate mouldings, of which we possess many beautiful fragments in the Museum, was most likely imported from Rome or the Isle of Samos, although by some it is conjectured to have been a skilful local imitation.

Pottery field.

The Samian ware.

Among the Roman remains in the Town Museum is preserved a very solid but elegantly-shaped stone tank, which was found many years since at the upper end of High Cross Street, and probably formed the basin of one of the public drinking-fountains at which the Roman women filled their jars for home consumption. As an indication of the sanitary arrangements of the town there is said to be evidence of a public main sewer passing beneath it from east to west, with which the house drains communicated.

The well-known Milliare or Milestone now in the Museum ranks, however, next in importance to the Jewry Wall and neighbouring Mosaic Pavement, as a relic of the Roman period; and in addition to the fact of its being the oldest stone inscription in Britain, it is also valuable as recording the date of the journey of the Emperor Hadrian to these shores in A.D. 120. This Milestone was brought to light in

The Milestone of Hadrian, A.D. 120.

1771, while digging gravel by the Foss Road, near to the old toll-gate at Thurmaston, where for twelve years afterwards it was allowed to remain, unprotected and uncared for, save by the antiquarians whom chance or curiosity directed to the spot. In 1783, however, the Leicester Corporation took possession of the venerable relic, and erected it as an object of interest in Belgrave Gate, near the junction of Bedford Street, utilising it at the same time as a pedestal for a street lamp. The latter was afterwards replaced by a stone cross. But the exposed position was extremely detrimental to the disinterred Milestone. The sharpness of its inscription rapidly began to wear off, and some of the letters had actually disappeared when, in 1844, the Literary and Philosophical Society came to the rescue, and by memorialising the Corporation upon the subject, succeeded in procuring the removal of the valuable relic to the Museum, where it could undergo no further deterioration. A free translation of the inscription runs as follows :—" To the Emperor and Cæsar the august Trajan Hadrian, son of the divine Trajan, surnamed Particus, grandson of the divine Nerva Pontifex Maximus, four times invested with Tribunitial power, thrice Consul. .From Ratæ. Two miles." The visits of the Roman Emperors to their distant colonies in Britain being extremely rare, the imposing progress of the great Hadrian through the island formed a very important episode ; hence the dedication to him of this Milestone, probably erected just after, or at the time of, his passage through Ratæ on his route northwards.

Roman Government in Leicester.

The form of government in Leicester under the Romans, as at their other Stations in Britain, was briefly this. At first it was merely a stipendiary city, so called from the yearly

THE ROMAN MILESTONE, BELGRAVE GATE, LEICESTER, IN 1836.

tribute or stipend paid to the Imperial exchequer; and as such was completely under the control of the military Prefect or Governor. About A.D. 212, however, the freedom of the city of Rome was extended to all subjects in the British Isles by the Emperor Caracalla, and from this time the inhabitants enjoyed the advantage of a local governing body. This was called the Curia or Council, and consisted of ten magistrates or decemvirs, out of whom two higher officers, more resembling the modern mayors, and called duumviri, were chosen.

The rights and interests of particular trades were protected by fraternities, from which the mediæval Guilds were doubtless afterwards derived. Thus the fraternities of the bakers, of the smiths, and of the wood cutters are mentioned in certain inscriptions found at Roman Stations in Britain. The prerogatives of the Imperial power were at the same time closely watched, and the collecting of the Revenue was duly carried out under the supervision of the resident Prefect, whose authority and decision were final in all matters of appeal.

Following upon the dim distance of the Celtic period, the vision of Roman Leicester stands out clearly illumined by the light of the evidence which material facts supply; but, like the momentary glimpse of a far-off mountain landscape which the lifting mists reveal, the envelopping clouds once more obscure it, and memory or imagination only may recall its vanished glory.

PART II.

Leicester under the Anglo-Saxons and Danes.

From A.D. 450 to A.D. 1068.

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Leicester under the Anglo-Saxons and Danes.

From A.D. 450 to A.D. 1068.

CHAPTER III.

AFTER the Roman forces were recalled from Britain about the middle of the fifth century to protect the frontiers of their falling empire from the advancing Goths, the sorrowing inhabitants of our island were left to defend themselves unaided against the frequent and harassing incursions of the Picts and Scots; and our Romano-British ancestors appear to have been so little accustomed to stand alone that, with short-sighted policy, they at once negotiated with a people called the Angles, dwelling on the shores of the river Elbe, in Germany, to assist them in expelling their troublesome northern neighbours. This astute and enterprising people, some of whom were already familiar with various parts of our island, and well aware of its advantages of climate and fertility, willingly advanced

Departure of the Romans from Britain, about A.D. 450.

to the rescue; but after relieving their weaker allies from immediate danger, they soon proved themselves a still more formidable and insidious foe by commencing to arrive in great numbers upon our shores to explore, settle down upon, and finally to take possession of, the land; establishing themselves over large districts with a dogged pertinacity of claim against which the unfortunate Britons found themselves powerless to contend.

The Angles take possession.

From this point, although not without many a fierce struggle to shake off the treacherous stranger who continued to advance and colonize in ever-increasing numbers, the native Briton was gradually dislodged from his rightful position as owner of its soil, and was driven to take up his abode among the remote mountain fastnesses of Wales, Cumberland, and Cornwall; emigrating too, across the Channel to the flat shores of Brittany, where numberless stone relics and surviving superstitions still attest his presence as one of the ancestors of the local peasantry.

The Angles meanwhile for a number of years existed in Britain as separate tribes, spreading themselves over the land, and giving it the name of Angle-land or England; but they and their possessions were gradually consolidated into the seven kingdoms known as the Saxon Heptarchy. Of these Mercia occupied the central position, and Leicester or "Legreceastre," the camp on the River Lyger or Leir, became its chief city.

About a century and a half after their first arrival upon our shores, the Angles were converted to the Christian faith, and Peada, a descendant of one of the old Mercian chieftains, received the rite of baptism upon the occasion of his marriage with the daughter of the King of Northumberland.

The kingdom of Mercia being in course of time divided into four dioceses, Leicester was made into a Bishopric in conjunction with Lichfield; but it afterwards became an independent See, having one Totta or Torthelm for its regular Bishop about A.D. 731. His primitive cathedral, the first known Christian place of worship in Leicester, and the Mother Church of the town, was built at its north-eastern angle outside the walls, being the precise spot now occupied by St. Margaret's Church, and probably thus named; while the simple dwelling of the Bishop stood close by, upon the site of the present vicarage. The adjoining land was appropriated to his use and maintenance, and was called the "Bishop's Fee," a title which may still be seen in old deeds of property in this district; and in an ancient plan of Leicester, the narrowest part of the angle at the junction of the Belgrave and Humberstone Gates is marked as the "Bishoppe's ffarme," upon which the citizens long had the right to pasture a cow or a horse.

Introduction of Christianity into Leicester in the eighth century.

St. Margaret's Church.

Both Church and Bishop's residence, (the terms Cathedral and Palace are manifestly inappropriate to these early times), were of the rudest construction; the former probably consisting of a framework of timber filled in with mud and plaster, with narrow unglazed openings at the sides for light, seats around the walls, an altar at one end, and a low bell-tower rising from the roof at the other. All trace of the original building has long vanished, but its site has ever since been devoted to ecclesiastical use, and the Church of St. Margaret has always occupied a unique position in our town as the scene of its earliest known public Christian worship.

Following upon the erection of St. Margaret's, the

St. Nicholas' Church.

churches of St. Nicholas and St. Martin were the two next to be built in Leicester, and both rose as already mentioned, upon the sites of Roman Temples. The first-named is especially interesting and in a historical sense important, for it still includes in the north wall of its nave portions of the identical walls of the original Saxon Church, showing a quantity of material taken from the Jewry Wall or other ruined Roman buildings near the spot. The narrow window openings in the same north wall above the Norman arches are also of umistakeable Saxon work.

Close to the east end of St. Nicholas' Church, and believed by some authorities to have been attached to it as chapels, were the minor churches of St. Augustine and St. Colombo, which are said to have been destroyed by the Normans when they took the town of Leicester in 1068. Prior to the Norman Conquest, there had also arisen the Parish Churches of All Saints (or All Hallowes), St. Peter, and St. Michael, all in the neighbourhood of High Cross Street; besides those of St. Martin, St. Margaret, and St. Nicholas, and the Castle-Church of St. Mary. All these Saxon places of worship

Parish Churches in Leicester in Saxon times.

would be small, and of the simplest construction and outline; although as time advanced beautiful and intricate carvings in wood and stone were doubtless introduced. It must, however, be borne in mind that of the churches erected in Leicester during these early times all, with the exception of portions of St. Nicholas, have completely disappeared, and that their sites only, occupied by later structures, now remain.

The city and inhabitants.

The Anglo-Saxon city, although enclosed within the ancient and massive walls erected by the Romans, and doubtless embellished by many remaining portions of important buildings of the later Roman period, was of a more simple and elementary character than that of its highly-civilized predecessors; and its probable appearance has been likened to the large and scattered agricultural villages of a century or two ago. The citizens, who now began to take the name of burgesses, from their burgages or separate little plots of land, dwelt in small thatched and gabled houses, more or less surrounded by trees. Each household spun and wove its simple clothing; and the tillage of the ground occupied the time of a large portion of the male inhabitants. The burgesses were allowed to pasture their cows and horses on a space formerly cleared by the Romans on the south side of the town, in the district between our present London and Wigston Roads, much of which has remained to this day public property. On the northern and western sides, the thick forest still stretched almost to the very gates of the town; and the large herds of swine, which provided the staple animal food of the people, were daily driven to and fro to fatten upon its acorns and rough herbage. Salted meat alone could be procured during six months of the year.

The rich, however, had in addition poultry and venison, fish and game; and feasting and drinking were dear to the hearts of such of our early English ancestors as possessed the means for gratifying their tastes in this direction.

The introduction of secular and social institutions soon followed the establishment of Christian worship in the city of Leicester. The "Portmanmote" was one of these,—a court of arbitration in disputes relating to debt and property; and a Merchant Guild, really of Roman origin, also early existed for the mutual protection of the citizens, the regulation of trade, and the levying of taxes for the defence of the town and repair of its walls and public buildings. Trade, however, and more especially handicrafts, were held somewhat in disrepute, the pursuits of war and agriculture alone being considered worthy to occupy the attention of this martial race. The mechanical arts were therefore chiefly carried on by the numerous classes of bondsmen, among whom were many half-enslaved Celts, descendants of the ancient population.

The inroads of the Danes at the end of the ninth century.

In the latter part of the ninth century England was disdisturbed and devastated by the fierce inroads of the Danes, who swarmed up the Humber and the Trent in their small and easily-managed boats, and penetrated into the very heart of the country, carrying fire and sword among the simple and terrified population, whom they ruthlessly pillaged and massacred in their cruel and insolent raids. Leicester and Derby fell into their hands in 874, and together with Nottingham, Stamford, and Lincoln, were formed into a confederation of towns thenceforth known as the Danish "five boroughs."

The Pagan invaders, stern worshippers of Odin and Thor,

burned the churches and trampled upon the Christian rites of the oppressed people; and in order to preserve the Bishopric of Leicester from their sacriligeous hands, it was hastily transferred to Dorchester near Oxford, where it found a resting place until, after some further changes, it was finally absorbed into the See of Lincoln, in the year 1078. Leicester, however, remained a city until the latter date. It continued under the pastoral charge of the Bishop of Lincoln until quite modern times, being united to the Diocese of Peterborough in the year 1837. At what period the "Bishoppe's ffarme" already mentioned was added to the property of the Diocese in Leicester, is unknown. The only mention we have of it is on an undated pen-and-ink plan of Leicester, which was probably drawn about the middle or end of the sixteenth century, as the accompanying description refers to the "late dissolved College of the Newarke." It is here termed the "Bishoppe's ffarme, wherein the Towne have Commons for horses, kyne and swyne."

Leicester no longer a Bishopric.

With its surrender to the Danes, it is probable that our town would lose much of the dignity of its outward appearance from the wanton destruction of many of the old Roman buildings hitherto left standing; and it would be extremely interesting to know how far the ancient Roman walls had withstood the first fierce onslaught of the Pagan invaders, who now occupied and governed Leicester for an uninterrupted period of forty years. The Dane Hills were probably used by them at one time as an encampment, and their presence in the neighbourhood is still testified by the frequent occurrence of the affix "by" in the names of many villages in all parts of our county, denoting a Danish settlement, as Rotherby, Sileby, Thurnby, Barkby, Beeby, Enderby, Groby, Oadby, &c., &c.

Leicester as a Danish city, about A.D. 874.

The great Ethelflœda.

The Danes continued to occupy Leicester until the year 920, when Ethelflœda, the warlike and patriotic daughter of king Alfred the Great, and widow of Ethelred, Earl of Mercia, avenged their hated usurpation by collecting a large army and marching against them. This many-gifted woman stands out as the central figure in this dark and stormy period of the history, not only of Leicester, but of other towns in the midland district, for Northampton, Derby, and Chester were also recaptured by her from the Danes. Of our own town she is said to have repaired or rebuilt the walls and fortifications, and to have erected a Castle outside its south-west angle with a Church adjoining, dedicated to St. Mary. That she did great works of restoration is certain; but many authorities are of opinion that a Saxon Castle and Church were already in existence, Leicester being at that time the seat of an important Earldom; and as Ethelflœda died at the Castle of Tamworth in 922, the time would have been exceedingly short in which to accomplish labours of such magnitude. This energetic and enlightened princess also succeeded in re-establishing Christian worship in Leicester, and induced many of its people to receive the rite of baptism in the river Soar.

Unsettled ownership and fierce conflicts.

From the time of Ethelflœda until the conquest of Leicester by the Normans, the town appears to have been alternately in the hands of the Danes and the English, and the neighbourhood was probably the scene of many a bloody struggle between them. Traces of one of these conflicts came to light as lately as the year 1853 when, upon lowering the crown of the London Road hill at the entrance of the road to Evington, a number of human skeletons, amounting to between one and two hundred, were found not far below the surface. Buried

with them were many specimens of Saxon fibulæ or brooches, and other ornaments. This affray, however, may possibly have occurred at the time of the Norman invasion of the town, which took place in 1068.

A Royal Mint in Leicester.

It is interesting to learn that in the reign of the Saxon king Athelstane a Royal Mint was in existence near the North Bridge, and that it continued to issue the current coinage until the time of Henry II.—ceasing probably at the destruction of the town in 1173. These early English coins appear to have been far inferior in workmanship to those issued by the Romans in Britain, as was indeed natural in their far less advanced state of civilization. The coiners or "moneyers" annually paid £20 in pennies for their privilege, two-thirds of this payment going to the king, and the remaining third to the lord of the district.

Local Government and Imperial taxes.

The burgesses of Saxon Leicester appear to have enjoyed a large amount of independence in their local government, but in return they paid a yearly tax to the king in coin and honey, and twelve of their number were compelled to attend him on his military expeditions. If any of these were beyond the sea, the town was also required to furnish four horses to carry the baggage as far as London, remote places in the south of England being then frequently the headquarters of the sovereigns.

The last Saxon Earl of Leicester;

Leofric Earl of Coventry and Leicester, with his wife the renowned Lady Godiva, were at Leicester Castle at Whitsuntide of the year 1051 for the purpose of witnessing the grant of a charter for building and endowing the monastery of Spalding; and their grandson Edwin, whose sister was the beautiful Algitha, wife of king Harold, was the last Saxon Earl of Leicester. After the decisive battle of Hastings, in

and its conquest by the Normans in 1068.

which the young Earl Edwin took part, he did homage and swore obedience to the Conqueror: but when, some time later, he sued for the hand of the Norman princess, his daughter, it was haughtily refused him, and his new-born submission to an alien king quickly changed to anger and mortification. Calling in the aid of his brother Morcar, Earl of Northumberland, who joined him with a large following of kinsmen and dependents, he once more took up arms against the Normans, now engaged in a second campaign in the interior of the island. He was defeated, and it is said that both brothers were treacherously slain. It was not until the summer of the year 1068, nearly two years after he landed upon our coasts, that William the Conqueror advanced towards the Midlands; and having taken possession of Oxford and then of Warwick, approached Leicester. After a fierce struggle and resistance by the inhabitants he succeeded in planting his banner upon the walls of our already ancient town, which was laid almost in ruins, together with the Saxon Castle and Church of St. Mary, situated at the south-western angle of its strong but simple fortifications.*

* Miss Bateson, in a footnote to page xiii. of the introductory chapter of her "Records of the Borough of Leicester," quotes the opinion of a high authority that the town was not destroyed by the Normans in 1068. The fact, however, that Domesday Book records only 64 burgesses in Leicester, while there existed 322 houses and six churches, seems to point to a largely destroyed population, if not of their habitations.

PART III.

Leicester under its Norman and Plantagenet Earls.

From A.D. 1068 to A.D. 1399.

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CHAPTER IV.

THIS is an extremely interesting period in the history of Leicester, for towards the end of it the town rose to the highest point of its importance as a mediæval borough, not only in respect of its local affairs, but as contributing in no small degree to the development of certain great epochs and events in our national history.

The town after the Norman conquest.

Out of a population of about 3,000, only sixty-four heads of families had survived the struggle against the Norman invaders in the year 1068, although there were standing 322 houses, two mills, and six parish churches. These were the Churches of St. Margaret, St. Martin, St. Nicholas, All Saints, St. Peter, and St. Michael. The last-named, which probably stood in some part of the square enclosed by High Cross Street, Causeway Lane, East Bond Street, and Sanvey Gate,

was demolished in the twelfth century; while St. Peter's, whose exact site is also uncertain, survived until the middle of the sixteenth century. This Church is generally supposed to have been placed on or near the ground occupied by the late Borough Gaol, but there are indications that it stood at the angle of West Bond Street and St. Peter's Lane, for in excavating for the foundations of a warehouse on that spot in the year 1839, a great number of human bones and fragments of ecclesiastical masonry were discovered, and a few others are still to be seen *in situ* close by.*

It is singular that several churches should have been placed so near together in this quarter of the town, but here no doubt the population was largest, and the churches were probably very small.

Hugh de Grentmesnil.

After taking possession of Leicester, William the Conqueror granted the greater part of it to his Norman follower, Hugh de Grantmesnil, whom he installed as Governor or Lieutenant, and Sheriff of Leicestershire. This chieftain repaired the rude Saxon church and castle, and in place of the latter, which possibly stood upon the "Mount" before referred to, and had consisted only of a few fortified wooden erections enclosed within a stockade, he now built a more formidable stronghold of stone, after the Norman fashion. From thence, by the help of his garrison, he ruled the conquered people with a despotic hand, abolishing many of their ancient rights, and imposing upon them various irksome restraints and unwelcome foreign customs. Among these the Ordeal of Battle was substituted for the ancient mode of trial

* Since the above was written, further proofs in support of this theory have come to light while digging for a deep sewer along this part of St. Peter's Lane.

by a jury of twenty-four Burgesses. The right of fetching wood from the neighbouring forest was also heavily taxed, which became a grievous burden upon a population depending solely upon it for fuel and other domestic purposes.

After the death of the Conqueror, Hugh de Grantmesnil became a partisan of the claims of Robert of Normandy, his eldest son, and conspired on his behalf against William Rufus, then king. The lattter avenged himself by ordering Robert de Beaumont, Earl of Meulan, to destroy the castle, church, and greater part of the town of Leicester. Subsequently Hugh made suitable amends, and was restored to favour and to his former position, but in 1094 he retired to a monastery at Utica in Normandy, and died soon after.

His son Ivo appears to have succeeded to the offices of Sheriff of the County and Governor of Leicester. But he, like his father, fell under the royal displeasure, and was ordered to pay a fine so heavy that he was unable to meet it. He thereupon applied for assistance to Robert de Beaumont, the friend and adviser of king Henry I., as of his predecessors, and he agreed to lend him the necessary money for a pilgrimage to Jerusalem as a means of appeasing the king; shrewdly bargaining to take over his lands for fifteen years as security. Ivo died on the journey, and thus his estates remained in De Beaumont's possession, as well as the Governorship of Leicester, which he already held.

Robert de Beaumont, First Norman Earl of Leicester, A.D. 1107.

In the year 1107 king Henry I. bestowed the earldom of Leicester upon Robert de Beaumont, and thus he became the first of a long line of earls who, by their individuality and

prowess, as well as by their subsequent connection with the reigning House of England, brought our town on several occasions into national prominence. During his lifetime, however, De Beaumont continued to be styled Earl of Meulan in preference to the local title, the former no doubt carrying far more weight and importance than that attaching to an earldom in a conquered country. He had rendered great services to the family of the Conqueror, for which he was liberally rewarded; and he became by his singular ability, address, and power of accretion, the most important noble in the realm. He possessed estates all over the country, and amassed great riches, "in worldly affairs," says the old chronicler Henry of Huntingdon, "the wisest man betwixt England and Jerusalem."

While firmly ruling the burgesses of Leicester, De Beaumont not only gained their confidence and goodwill by remitting some of the taxes and burdens of his predecessor, but further conciliated them by abolishing the senseless Ordeal of Battle. He also restored their ancient Portmanmote, or Jury of twenty-four Burgesses, already dear in principle to the justice-loving instinct of the English mind. On their part the grateful citizens agreed to pay the Earl a yearly tax of three pennies for every gabled house in the High Street, which ran between the North and South Gates of the town along the line of the present High Cross Street; and this tax was thenceforward known as the Gabel or Govel Pence.

The manner in which the first of these beneficial changes was brought about was as follows:—One or two kinsmen who, according to the Norman law, were one day engaged in mortal combat in the Castle yard in order to determine which was the rightful claimant to a piece of land in dispute between them was, after a struggle of many hours, pressed so

far backwards by his opponent as to be on the point of falling into the open grave prepared for the false aspirant. An involuntary cry of warning escaping the lips of his antagonist saved him, and the episode so excited the crowd of onlookers that they raised a lusty cheer. This reached the ears of the Baron in the recesses of his Castle, and upon learning the cause, the folly of this mode of judgment and its unpopularity among the Saxon townsmen seems at once to have become apparent to him. He immediately stopped the combat, and summoning the leading citizens negotiated, by the imposition of the Gabel Pence, the return to the ancient mode of Trial by Jury.

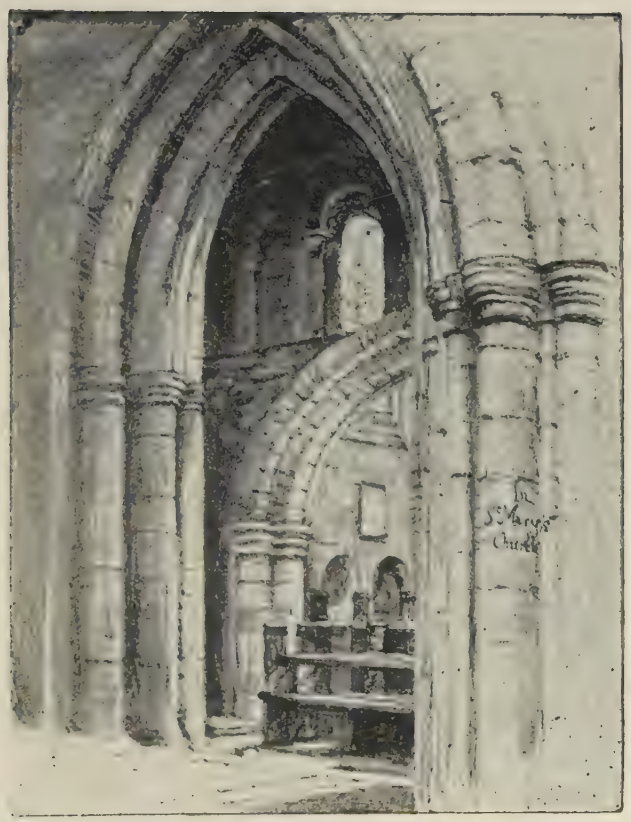
The old Merchant Guild was also now re-established by permission of the Earl, and most of the citizens at once enrolled themselves in it for mutual protection, and for the regulation of such town matters as were entrusted to their administration. The locality of their meeting place or Guildhall at this period is unknown.

Leicester Castle rebuilt.

But the work of Robert de Beaumont which possesses the greatest interest for the present citizens of Leicester, and which after a period of more than eight hundred years of varied fortunes we may partially identify in some of its still remaining features, was the rebuilding of the Castle and Church upon a much more important scale than had been attempted by its previous owners. Upon the "Mount" he erected a new and massive Keep or Donjon as a central fortification and place of refuge for the garrison; but of this building no traces whatever now remain. The upper part of the Mount was considerably cut down and levelled during the eighteenth century for its conversion into a bowling green, and it is probable that much interesting foundation

material was then carted away and lost sight of. A late writer on this subject affirms indeed, that there never was a Norman Keep of the usual structure in the Castle of Leicester, but this is contrary to the local opinion. The most important feature of the new Castle, however, was its great Hall, destined to be the scene of many an impressive and momentous event in our mediæval history, and which still exists in outline, though intact only as regards a portion of its roof timbers, being sadly disfigured by its unsightly modern wall-casings and by the division of the interior into compartments for use as Assize Courts. The residential part of the Castle was at this time comparatively small and unimportant, but was greatly added to by the Earls of Lancaster two centuries later, and consisted of a range of buildings

THE MOUNT AND ST. MARY'S CHURCH.
From the grounds of Trinity Hospital.



INTERIOR OF ST. MARY'S CHURCH.

From near the South Door.

facing north and south, and standing at a right angle to what we now know as "the Castle." Traces of this domestic portion of the edifice still remain in the wall materials of the old houses near the gateway which leads from the Castle Yard into Castle Street, close to the north door of St. Mary's Church.

IN THE CHANCEL, ST. MARY'S.

St. Mary de Castro, rebuilt about 1107.

The Church itself, St. Mary de Castro, as it was called, was now rebuilt and enlarged for the use of the Earl and his retainers, but all that remains at the present time of the Norman portion of the building consists of the chancel and of part of the walls, arches, and roof of the north-west end, with the restored low western doorway into the Castle yard. This interesting doorway, intended as the private entrance for the inhabitants of the Castle, was formerly plastered up and entirely hidden from view; but towards the middle of the present century, and through the exertions of the Rev. John Brown, the then Vicar, and our late learned antiquarian, Mr. William Kelly, it was discovered and once more brought into daylight.

Afterwards, during a course of several years, the Church underwent a gradual but thorough restoration, mainly at the expense and with the architectural knowledge and skill of Mr. Thomas Nevinson, who spared neither trouble, anxiety, nor cost, in his desire to render the work as complete and satisfactory as its intricate nature permitted.

Robert de Beaumont placed in the Church a College, consisting of a Dean and twelve secular Canons; he also endowed it largely, appropriating to its use revenues from all the churches in Leicester and the suburbs, with the exception of St. Margaret's which, with the Bishopric of Leicester, had been made over to the See of Lincoln in the year 1078.

The Bishop of Lincoln also owned a portion of the land on the east and north-east side of the town, which was called the Bishop's Fee, before referred to; and thus he was virtually a rival of the Earl in respect of the rented property in the borough.

The Old West Bridge.

In connection with the rebuilding of the Castle and Church should be mentioned the erection of the original West Bridge, with its gateway into the town, which Mr. Kelly considers as probably the work of Robert de Beaumont for the purpose of easier approach to the Castle, and for completing its defences. Possibly from this having been but a minor part of his labours, it has not been accredited to him by the earlier historians of Leicester.

Projecting from the south-east end of the bridge as it stood until the middle of the nineteenth century, and partly supported upon piles and arches of early Norman work, was a quaint little Chapel dedicated to "Our Lady of the Brigge," and maintained from the funds of the College of St. Mary of the Castle. The bridge was of two periods, being partially

rebuilt in 1290 with stone from the neighbouring Dane Hill Quarries, and wood bought in the Saturday Market; and the Chapel was then probably restored, for when this later erection, after the lapse of nearly six centuries, was taken down in 1841 sufficient indication yet remained in the structure of the eastward arch and of the ancient Chapel above it, (then used as a dwelling-house,) to justify the opinion that both originally dated from the earlier period.

Beyond the bridge, and extending far away on the western and northern outskirts of the town lay the still uncleared forest, which in those days, according to Dr. Samuel Carte, a local antiquarian of the early part of the eighteenth century, "was so large and so very full of wood as to be scarcely passable; whereupon he granted liberty to his burgesses to fetch wood from thence, paying weekly as followeth: six

cart-loads a denier ($7\frac{1}{2}$d.); a horse's load, one penny; and for a man's load, one farthing." The wood-money was at first collected on the borders of the forest, but afterwards paid as a toll in crossing the North and West Bridges, whence it obtained the name of the Brigge-silver. The approach to the North Bridge from the Groby road, which is still called Wood Gate, seems to have some reference to this tax.

Thus did this wise and statesmanlike Governor seek to benefit the town and the people over whom he had won the right to rule, and from whose neighbourhood he partly derived the means of supporting his newly-acquired position and influence. In addition to his estates in this neighbourhood he possessed many other lordships previously conferred upon him by the Conqueror himself, to whom he had stood in the position of friend, counsellor, and companion-in-arms. Although at this distance of time we can trace but few of his outward characteristics, there is no doubt that he possessed a strong and shrewd personality, and that he exercised a firm administration over the conquered people of this district, for whom, in the direct male line, he founded a family of rulers for a century to come.

Robert de Beaumont spent the last years of his life at the Abbey of Preaux in France; and on his death there in 1118, the earldom of Leicester passed to his eldest son.

FRAGMENT OF ABBEY WALL.

Robert Bossu, Second Norman Earl of Leicester, A.D. 1118.

Robert, surnamed Bossu or hunchback from his bodily deformity, is to be remembered in the annals of Leicester as the founder of its Abbey of St. Mary de Pratis, which he placed on the north-east side of the town, and so named from its situation in the meadows beyond the river. Its date is about 1143; and with a singular lack of the sense of filial obligation the Earl transferred to it most of the College and endowments given by his father to St. Mary of the Castle. Although he afterwards made partial compensation to the latter church by replacing in it eight canons, (of whom one was the Dean), and by conferring upon them the oblations, its original prestige was gone, and from that time it was called "St. Mary the Less."

Leicester Abbey founded A.D. 1143.

It is a remarkable fact, and one greatly to be deplored, that notwithstanding repeated search by archæological experts and others few, if any, traces of the original Abbey of Leicester have been discovered; for the ruined buildings now enclosed within the spacious walls do not represent the edifice at the time of its dissolution,—still less the early erection of Robert Bossu. The site appears to have been devoted to pious uses from very ancient times, for many Roman urns containing bones have been found there. The original Abbey was probably a simple but massive building, with a transept and a low square tower. Nichols, the historian of Leicestershire, says "it appears to have consisted of three bays of building besides the Church." Within fifty years of its erection, however, the Countess Petronilla, wife of the third Earl of Leicester, added the great nave, and is said to have woven a rope of her long and abundant hair whereby to suspend the lamp in the Choir; a tangible proof of her piety long afterwards preserved as a relic.

The Abbey lands and farms.

The Abbey was richly endowed by Robert Bossu, and in course of time it possessed large estates in and around Leicester, besides others at a greater distance. It had four granges or farms where the corn rents were deposited, and a Prior or Master of the Grange resided at each. These were situated at Westcotes, Stoughton, Ingarsby, and Meadowplek, in the High Peak of Derbyshire. Nichols tells us that in 1326 the number of lambs received by the Abbey for tithes in the Peak District was 237, and of fleeces 426, a valuable contribution towards its income. In the same century the Duke of Lancaster granted license to the Abbey to enclose a portion of the forest as a deer-park, and gave the deer wherewith to stock it. The third Earl, Robert Blanchmains, had

long before this given to the Abbot and convent the liberty of fishing in his "great pool at Groby" four times in the year, on the eve of certain church festivals. This grant was afterwards exchanged for other concessions, the community probably possessing fish-ponds nearer home. At all times they were allowed to gather three cart-loads of fuel daily in the forest, and to pasture their swine on the Earl's domains without payment of dues.

The Religious Community of Leicester Abbey.

The nucleus of the religious community occupying the Abbey of Leicester consisted, as has been already said, of the secular canons transferred from the Church of St. Mary de Castro. They at once adopted monastic rule, enrolling themselves as Canons Regular of the Order of St. Augustine. Their number is said never to have exceeded twenty. They were governed by an Abbot, Prior, and Sub-Prior, under whom were the heads of departments connected with the domestic arrangements and material well-being of the Society. The habit of its Order consisted of a white coat and linen surplice, under a black cloak and hood, the partially shaven heads of the members being covered with a wide and cornered black cap when walking abroad.

Hospitality to travellers.

The daily life of the canons, in addition to their regular devotions and the transcribing and illuminating of manuscripts, was largely occupied in works of charity outside the Abbey walls; while their hospitalities to strangers and visitors, which became more lavish as time went on, made great demands upon their time and resources. It was customary in the Middle Ages for travellers of all degrees to look for shelter and entertainment at the great Religious Houses along their route; and kings, nobles, and ecclesiastical dignitaries, with their large retinues, as well as the

poorest wayfarers and beggars alike, benefitted by the hospitality extended to them at these welcome halting-places. A separate dining room was provided for visitors, and there was a parlour where conversation was permitted. The Abbey also contained an Infirmary, the benefits of which were shared by all the sick of the neighbourhood, for the religious Orders in mediæval times everywhere acted as the physicians and apothecaries of the poor.

The canons of Leicester Abbey appear to have been by no means severely ascetic in their mode of life, but mixed freely with their guests, and shared in the delicacies set before them. In connection with the convivial habits usually ascribed to the religious Orders in England at this period it is suggestive to learn that phlebotomy was ordered at stated times during the year; and that "to prevent junkettings in the Infirmary" it was a general rule that none of the fraternity, if in health, should enter there; nor was any layman to enter it, except the servants and the practitioners. Neither were sporting tastes entirely repressed among the brethren, for in the reign af Edward III. one of the abbots was a noted huntsman to whom the King, on visiting the Abbey, granted a Charter for the public sale of hounds within the Abbey precincts. Doubtless, however, these laxities had crept in very gradually, with the deterioration that time everywhere produced in these communities.

The brethren do not appear to have invariably lived in peace with their neighbours, for it is recorded that in 1357 the people of Belgrave, in consequence of a dispute with the Abbot concerning the boundaries of the "Stocking Wood" near to the Beaumont Leys, proceeded to blockade the North Bridge, with the intention of cutting off the supplies of

provisions for the Abbey from the Granges of Westcotes and Stoughton.

At one time the Abbots of Leicester sat in Parliament, but on account of the trouble, expense, and danger of journeying to London, Edward III. granted exemption from their attendance. As an instance of the perils of travel in these rude and unsettled times it may be mentioned that in the year 1124 a notorious band of robbers had infested the county of Leicester, and that no less than eighty-four of their number were captured and hanged at Huncote by order of the King's Justiciary.

Prominent Abbots and canons.

A record of the Abbots and prominent canons of the Abbey of Leicester, taken from certain MSS. in the Lambeth Library and British Museum, is to be found in Nichols's History, and from it stand out the names of the learned Canon Gilbert Foliot who, towards the end of the twelfth century was twice excommunicated for upholding the cause of Henry II. against Becket, and was afterwards made Bishop of Hereford and finally of London;—of William Geryn who compiled a "rentale" or inventory in 1341, and among other gifts to the Abbey presented a large silver crucifix and the pulpit in the Refectory for exhortation during the noontide meal;—of Henry de Knighton, the local chronicler at the latter half of the 14th century,—and of his contemporary the good Abbot Clowne, when the Abbey gates are recorded to have been "newly built with brick." Later on, we come to Philip de Repington, a canon excommunicated in 1382 for upholding the doctrines of Wickliffe, but upon recantation restored to his former position and afterwards made Bishop of Lincoln and then a Cardinal;—to the beloved and respected Prior William Charyte, living in the fifteenth century

who, during his residence of over sixty years did great service to the Abbey and to posterity by compiling another most important "rentale" of the Abbey lands and goods; a work of minute detail which occupied some twenty-five years of his secluded life;—and finally, of John Penny, made Abbot in 1496, of whom Leland, quoted by Nichols, says "this Penny made the new bricke works of Leicester Abbey and much of the bricke walles." A large portion of Abbot Penny's brick wall, much patched and renovated, still stands in the long line of the Abbey Lane, terminating at the north-western angle with its beautiful though mutilated niche which once no doubt contained a carved stone image. The material for the brickwork was probably found close at hand in the clay beds of the fields adjoining the old road to Anstey, and which may, a century earlier, have furnished the bricks for Abbot Clowne's gateways. The use of brick in mediæval times was rare.

Abbot Penny about 1500.

NICHE IN ABBEY WALL, N.W. CORNER.

Abbot Penny was promoted to the bishopric of Bangor and Carlisle in 1508, but died and was buried in Leicester Abbey

while on a visit there in 1520. At its dissolution in 1539 his tomb was removed to the chancel of St. Margaret's Church, towards the rebuilding of which he had largely contributed, and where his recumbent alabaster effigy may still be seen.

Chapels in the Abbey.

The principal Chapel in the Abbey was that dedicated to "Our Ladye." Cardinal Wolsey was afterwards buried in it. Nichols says, "The Chapel of St. Augustine was on the south side of the Church, as were the altars of St. Augustine and John the Baptist." Other altars enumerated by Charyte are the high altar of the Virgin, the altar of the Trinity, and those of St. Gabriel, St. Stephen, St. Michael, St. Leonard, St. Andrew, St. Catherine, and St. Anna, besides a portable altar which the community possessed by an especial indulgence from Pope Gregory IV.

Although conforming to rule the canons lived in material comfort and elegance, and a considerable amount of silver plate was in daily use. "The Abbot," says Nichols, "had apartments with every suitable office, and regular servants for his own immediate use. He presided on important occasions, and sometimes 'on great solemnities' dined with the canons in their refectory." To the Prior was committed the charge of the jewels and plate, the latter, as early as 1300, comprising twenty-one silver salt-cellars, and forty-three silver dishes. In the library, which was superintended by the precentor and sub-chanter, works on Astronomy and Physic occupied a prominent place.

We learn that at the dissolution of Leicester Abbey in 1539 the "household stuffe and ornaments of the churche" were sold for £228. The silver plate weighed 190 lbs., and the value of the land was estimated at £1000. The bells

were assessed at £88, and doubtless the sweet and silvery tone of the Abbey peal had for centuries daily floated over the river and quiet meadows to the town beyond. It is probable that among the minor buildings and outhouses within the precincts there existed, as was usual in all Religious Houses, a foundry, where the casting of a new bell, with all its attendant ceremonial and invocation of Saints would, from time to time, occupy the anxious attention of an Abbot.

To us, in modern days, the founding of this important Abbey of which so little now remains, constitutes by far the chief interest attaching to the memory of Robert Bossu, second Norman Earl of Leicester. But by the citizens of the ancient town, then but slowly recovering from the struggle with the conquering Normans, he was probably more esteemed for his goodwill in remitting the harsh taxes of the Gabel-pence and the Brigge-silver, from which he granted Charters

Robert Bossu remits the taxes of the Gabel-pence and the Brigge-silver.

of exemption. As an incentive to the religious zeal of his later years we are told that by it he hoped to expiate certain acts of insubordination and obstinacy in his youth ; and we can also readily believe that, debarred by his bodily infirmity from the martial pursuits of the age, and guided by a natural instinct for retirement, the hunchbacked Earl would prefer to interest himself in the peaceful life of the Abbey he had founded. He is said to have spent his latter years as a recluse within its walls, and to have died there in 1169. Robert Bossu also founded the Cistercian Monastery at Garendon ; and his wife, the Countess Amicia, inspired by a similar zeal for religion, established a nunnery at Nuneaton in Warwickshire, where she spent the remainder of her life as an enrolled member of its community.

CHAPTER V.

Robert Blanchmains, Third Norman Earl of Leicester, A.D. 1169.

THE third Earl of Leicester, surnamed Blanchmains, the white-handed, was the son of Robert Bossu; a man of hot temper, and a violent partizan of Queen Eleanor and her sons against her husband, King Henry II. This drew upon him disastrous consequences, for in the year 1173 the angry king sent his High Justiciary, Richard de Lucy, to lay siege to Leicester, and thus to reduce the refractory Earl to obedience.

Leicester besieged and destroyed 1173.

In this crisis, the unhappy citizens were, as they conceived, basely deserted by the Norman garrison who, the better to serve their master's cause, retreated into the Castle Keep, leaving them to defend themselves as best they could. As might be expected, the king's soldiery soon effected an entrance within the walls, and the ill-fated town of Leicester was again sacked, burnt, and partially laid in ruins, in accordance with the ruthless warfare of the times.

Matthew Paris, a chronicler of the thirteenth century, quoted by Nichols in relating this calamity says, "The walls" (possibly those originally built by the Romans,

patched and repaired during many centuries of service; but more probably newly erected on their own lines by the Saxon Queen Ethelflœda), "being faulty in their foundations when they were undermined, and the props burnt that supported them, fell in great pieces, which remain to this day, such was the indissoluble tenacity of the mortar." A dreadful slaughter followed the capture of the town, and the surviving citizens, cowed and demoralized, were fain to purchase from the soldiers permission to depart out of the gates and to seek refuge on church lands, some flying for sanctuary to the Abbey of St. Albans, and others as far as Bury St. Edmunds in Suffolk.

Desolation of the town.

In the general work of destruction, that quarter of the town in which stood the Church of St. Michael is said to have suffered the most severely, the edifice itself being demolished, and the parish completely laid waste. A spirit of desolation and ruin seems thenceforward to have overshadowed this district. Its uninhabited streets before long became green lanes; and the sites of the houses, which for centuries afterwards remained unbuilt upon, were converted into orchards. It is a singular fact, noticed by more than one of our local writers, that this district has never again become as thickly populated as other parts of the borough; and certainly no building of importance, with the exception of a Wool Hall which was in existence at the end of the sixteenth century, and was probably an adaptation of one of the ancient disused Hospitals, has since been erected in this locality; although in quite recent years modern requirements are gradually bringing the neglected space into greater prominence.

During this memorable siege and sack of the town, which

forms an important epoch in our local history, the Earl himself was absent in France; but he returned in haste to England, only to be taken prisoner by the King before reaching Leicester. His trusty Constable of the Castle, Anquetil de Mallory, defended it bravely, and held it with his garrison for the space of two years against the King's forces. At the end of that time, however, Henry compelled the gallant deputy to surrender it, with the Castles of Groby and Mountsorrel, also belonging to the Earl, by threatening to starve him to death with his Countess. These were still close prisoners in his hands, having been conveyed across the Channel for additional safety, and immured in a fortress in Normandy. The want of fusion between the Norman and English inhabitants of Leicester at this period is thus forcibly illustrated; the foreign soldiery abandoning the defenceless burgesses to the vengeance of the King in order to protect the stronghold of their absent lord.

The Earl and Countess were in time liberated; but his estates were forfeited, and the defences of Leicester Castle destroyed, so that he might never again be able to oppose his royal master. The troubled reign of King Henry II., however, was soon afterwards ended, and his son Richard I. at once restored to Earl Robert all his former dignities and possessions in recognition of the services he had rendered to himself and his mother, Queen Eleanor.

Revival of the town about 1200.

From this point the history of Leicester may be said to start afresh. For twenty-five years, indeed, the town remained practically deserted and lifeless, by reason of the destruction and flight of its citizens; but at the end of that time a fresh population, consisting of stragglers from the surrounding villages, and strangers from a greater distance,

began gradually to collect. Little by little the town recovered itself; the walls were rebuilt, churches were restored and added to; and a new and far more vigorous existence at length arose out of the ruin and desolation.

The Municipal Government.

In the year 1197 the Merchant Guild was re-established, and every tradesman in the town was expected to become a member.* The Guild was governed by an Alderman (Aeldorman), afterwards called Mayor, and a Council of twenty-four of its members, who were bound to attend the Alderman for the transaction of municipal business upon the ringing of a certain bell; and in this simple and primitive form did the Leicester Town Council Meetings have their origin.

It was not, however, until nearly a century after its re-establishment, that the Merchant Guild began to solidify into some resemblance to our modern Corporation; and the title of Mayor was borne for the first time by one Peter-fitz-Roger, in the year 1251, at which date also, the original Moot or Guild-Hall, whose locality is not known, was abandoned for a larger one at the lower end of Blue Boar Lane, near to St. Nicholas' Church, where the Guild or Council Meetings were held until the time of Queen Elizabeth.

The first Mayor of Leicester, A.D. 1251.

Robert Fitz Parnel, Fourth Earl of Leicester, A.D. 1190.

After the death of Robert Blanchmains in the year 1190, his son Robert Fitz Parnel succeeded him as Earl of Leicester; and he, like his father, was the friend and companion-in-arms

* In return for the fee of membership the right was conferred of trading within the borough, and of preventing strangers from doing so, save, perhaps, at the Fairs.

of Richard Cœur de Lion, whom he accompanied and faithfully served in the Crusades in the Holy Land. The badge of a cinquefoil upon ermine which had formed the coat-of-arms of Robert de Beaumont was adopted on his shield by Robert Fitz Parnel and afterwards used by the burgesses of Leicester upon their town banner; and this has ever since been retained as the central device upon our Borough coat-of-arms. The griffin, or more properly wyvern, was added as the crest of Thomas, Earl of Lancaster and Leicester, more than a century later.

When the lion-hearted King died, and was succeeded by his less popular brother John, the same royal favour was extended to the Earl, to which we owe certain privileges granted by Royal Charter at this period. But the growing distrust and dislike of their Sovereign, and the awakening spirit of independence in the English Barons, soon resulted in an actively hostile attitude towards him; and in a great meeting held in Leicester Castle in 1201, their grievances were for the first time openly declared and discussed. This meeting of the Barons was the precursor of the many still more turbulent and aggressive assemblies which finally led to the granting of Magna Charta in 1215.

Meeting of the Barons at the Castle.

Although frequently at Leicester Castle during his younger days, it is probable that King John never visited the Earl after ascending the throne, but he is known to have slept at Bosworth, Mountsorrel, Rockingham, Melton, and other places when, according to the custom of the time the King, attended by his Court, made progresses through the country for the purpose of establishing his claim to the crown-lands by consuming the produce of them due to him, in lieu of rent. Richard I. had rested at Leicester on his way to and

from Nottingham in 1193; but the current acceptance of a sinister saying that "evil would follow the King of England who sojourned in the Castle of Leicester," probably deterred the weak and possibly conscience-smitten John from venturing within its walls.

Simon de Montfort, (Husband of Amicia,) Fifth Norman Earl of Leicester, A.D. 1204.

With the death of Robert Fitz Parnel in the year 1204, the male line of the Beaumonts came to an end; but his sister and co-heiress Amicia, having married Sir Simon de Montfort, the latter succeeded in her right to the title and Earldom of Leicester. He seldom dwelt in the Castle, however, spending most of his life in France, where he took an active part under the banner of the French King in the wars of the Albigenses, and was slain at the battle of Toulouse, in the year 1218. He was succeeded in the Earldom of Leicester by hs fourth son,

Simon de Montfort, Sixth Norman Earl of Leicester, A.D. 1218.

The great Simon de Montfort, Earl of Leicester, who in his after life played so important a part in the history of the English Constitution, was born in France. At the time of his father's death he was a child of only eight years of age, and his mother died soon afterwards. We are ignorant of his guardians until he came under the influence of the great and good Robert Grosstête, Bishop of Lincoln, who had been formerly Rector of St. Margaret's and Archdeacon of Leicester,—a man of remarkable gifts and learning.

Bishop Grosstête.

Simon grew up a youth of great promise and physical beauty; talented, high-spirited, and brave. He was early attached to the Court of Henry III., where he attracted the notice and love of Alianor, the sixteen-year-old widow of the Earl of Pembroke, and sister of the King. With the royal consent he was privately married to her at Westminster in 1238, but the alliance caused great offence and scandal among the nobles and ecclesiastics from the fact that the bride had previously taken religious vows. For some years the King's favour continued; but after a time he became jealous of the increasing importance of the Earl, and of his authority in the land as a champion of the rights and liberties of all classes; and the subsequent years of Henry's reign were spent in a continual struggle against both the growing independence of the Barons, and the rising claim of the people to recognition as a power in the State.

In the mean time Simon de Montfort's social influence rose steadily, and he soon became the acknowledged leader of the English Barons, and the first subject in the realm. In virtue of his title of Earl of Leicester he bore the important office of Lord High Steward of England which had been granted to the first Earl, and held by all his successors.

Visit of King Henry III. to Leicester.

In the year 1264 King Henry and his son Prince Edward came to Leicester with a large and brilliant following of English and Scottish nobles and foreign princes, and was entertained by Simon de Montfort at the Castle; but the situation must have been somewhat strained, for the Earl's son a few days previously had been besieged and overthrown by Henry at Northampton, and the town and Castle delivered over to the vengeance of the King's soldiery. The superstitious fears of the consequences of a royal visit to the

Castle of Leicester were now, moreover, to be realized, for the King and the Prince were soon afterwards taken prisoners by the Barons at the battle of Lewes, and fell completely into the hands of their late host, the Earl of Leicester. While they were still captive, Simon de Montfort asserted his extraordinary power by issuing writs in the King's name to the Sheriffs throughout the kingdom commanding them to return to a meeting of Parliament two Knights for every shire and two Burgesses for every borough within the realm. This was the first regular Parliament of England, and the earliest occasion on which representatives of the people were admitted to a voice in the government of the country.

The first English Parliament, 1265.

Fall of Simon de Montfort.

But the career of Simon de Montfort had reached its climax. The confederated barons, reasonably jealous of his unlimited power, at length turned against him; and when shortly afterwards the great Earl met his death in the battle of Evesham, there was cruel rejoicing among them, and it is even said that his head was struck off and sent as a trophy to the regally-born wife who for his sake had renounced the cloister and braved the undying wrath of the church and nobles. His lands and titles were now declared forfeit to the King, and his death ended the line of Norman Earls of Leicester, of whom he undoubtedly was by far the greatest.

The faithful and much-tried Alianor was inconsolable for the loss of her husband and, as one of the old chroniclers relates, "would not taste fish nor fleshe, and had nothing for apparel but garments of wool,"—rough and course enough, no doubt, as manufactured in those days. She fled the country and hid her woes in the convent of Montanges in France, where she passed the remainder of her days.

Simon de Montfort conferred great benefits upon the people

of Leicester, by whom he was held in the greatest affection and respect. He redressed an important local grievance in again remitting the taxes of the Gabel-pence and the Brigge-silver; for although, as we have seen, this favour had already been granted by Robert Bossu, the Charters of exemption had unfortunately perished in a fire that occurred at the Clerk's house where they were deposited. It followed that in Earl Fitz Parnel's time certain unscrupulous men named Penbrioch and Simon Maudit, by paying a large sum to the Earl had been allowed to re-establish the collecting of these taxes; and there being no Charters in existence to appeal to, the defenceless burgesses had been constrained to submit to the imposition. Now, however, they boldly laid their grievance before Simon de Montfort, and he, though not without the consideration of a substantial bribe in money, (for but little disinterested action in high quarters appears to have been looked for in those times,) forthwith renewed the Charters, and freed the burgesses from further extortion. We may note in passing that the "consideration" was systematically collected by dividing the town into four quarters for the purpose.

The taxes of the Gabel-pence aud the Brigge-silver again remitted.

Simon de Montfort also granted to the burgesses of Leicester for their use and occupation for ever, a large district lying beyond the walls on the south side of the town, and then known as the Cowhay or South Fields, which extended to the further limits of the former Leicester Race-course, now the Victoria Park. To this gift, the inhabitants unquestionably owe the preservation to our own days of this fine open space as a public property, to the incalculable benefit of the town and its modern increase of population.

The origin of the old Race-course, now Victoria Park.

In the year 1228 King Henry III. granted leave to the

burgesses to change the time from June to February for holding their annual Fair, which indicates the antiquity of these commercial gatherings. Among the wide variety of crafts and industries in vogue in Leicester since Saxon times the wool trade was now beginning to take an important place, and the records of the Merchant Guild show that exports of fleeces were at this time made to France,—probably through the port of Boston.

Rise of trade and Commerce.

The thirteenth century was indeed throughout the kingdom a period of change and development. The arrival in England of the Dominican and Franciscan Friars, about the year 1225, occasioned a stir through the whole ecclesiastical portion of the community, and a perceptible religious revival among the common folk. Simon de Montfort bestowed great favour and encouragement upon these wandering preachers, each section of whom, under his patronage, established a Habitation in Leicester. Those of the order of St. Dominic, the Black Friars, located themselves upon some portion of the space between the present Soar Lane, High Cross Street, and Friars' Causeway; and the small church of St. Clement then standing there, and now for the first time mentioned by local historians, is recorded to have been made over to their use, as it had latterly become too poor to maintain a Chaplain. This Priory was called le Blak Frears in le Asshes, from the number of ash-trees surrounding it.

Arrival of the Friars Preachers in Leicester.

The Franciscans or Grey Friars established themselves in the neighbourhood of St. Martin's Church, where they afterwards built a Priory in the ample grounds allotted to them. These extended over the greater part of the space lying between the present Hotel Street and Southgate Street, with Friar Lane for its southern boundary, and New Street running directly across it.

Other Monastic Houses were also founded about this time in Leicester, of which the most important was the Augustine Priory of St. Catherine, just outside the walls near the Western Gate, and standing nearly on the site of the present gateway leading to the Swannington Railway Station. This being a mendicant order, two of the brethren were always stationed at the end of the West Bridge for the purpose of soliciting alms from the passers by; probably using the Bridge-Chapel for shelter in inclement weather.

Elsewhere, its site now unknown, was the more modest habitation of the brethren "de Penitentiâ Jesu Christi," but as this order soon died out in England, we hear very little more of its community in Leicester.

Hospitals founded by William the Leper.

Outside the town, in the direction of the Abbey, already lay several Hospitals or Religious Houses, which had been founded by William the Leper, a younger son of Robert Blanchmains who, probably moved by his own infirmity, and by a feeling more akin to the modern spirit of philanthropy than was common in those ruder times, sought to benefit the outcast sufferers and religious poor of his town. Of these ancient Hospitals or Bede-Houses one called St. Edmund's, or the Spital, for lepers only, stood on the road to Belgrave, on or near the site of the present "Pack-horse" Inn, not far from St. Mark's Church.* Another was St.

* It is not known at what date this building was destroyed, but others successively standing on its site have probably served the purpose of a roadside hostelry since the dissolution of the Religious Houses in the sixteenth century. In later times a small building belonging to the County and placed on what was called the "Cock-muck-hill," near the junction of Bedford Street with Belgrave Gate, took the place of the Spital as an almshouse for six poor people, appointed by the Justices. In 1782 these "Cock-muck-hill" houses (or the Spital, as it was even then

Leonard's Hospital, lying near the present church of that name beyond the North Bridge, and of which it is now only known that its revenues were dispersed at the Reformation. In connection with this there appears to have been a third Religious House called St. Andrew's, also owing its foundation to the afflicted son of the Earl, and situated in the same quarter, not far from the Abbey.

The Hospital of St. John the Baptist, in or near High Cross Street, was probably also in existence at this period, and is supposed to have long afterwards been converted into the Wool Hall which was established in that neighbourhood at the end of the sixteenth century.

St. Michael's Church.

Most of the Parish churches of Leicester were enlarged and decorated about the middle of the thirteenth century, and among them was that of St. Michael, which would appear to have risen afresh from the wreck of 1173, as the names of two of its vicars, between the years 1220 and 1234, have been preserved. This somewhat mythical church seems to have finally disappeared in the year 1490, when it was once more demolished, and its parish added to that of St. Peter.

The Abbot the patron of the Leicester Churches.

The patron of all the Leicester churches with the exception of St. Margaret's, which belonged to the diocese of Lincoln, and of St. Sepulchre's, a dependence of the Castle Church, and which stood on the site of the present Infirmary, was the Abbot of St. Mary de Pratis.

Side by side, however, with all the religious activity of the period, the evil spirit of intolerance, which has so often

sometimes called) were pulled down to widen the street, and six others to receive the inmates, built by subscription in St. Margaret's Church Lane, now Abbey Street, the administration being placed in the hands of the Churchwardens and officers of St. Margaret's parish, who still carry on the duties of the trust.

accompanied and degraded an onward impulse in this direction, flung its harsh and blighting influence over a portion of the community which, if unpopular, was at least industrious and useful. This was the large colony of Jews who, as was customary in all cities in the Middle Ages, were located apart from the other inhabitants in a quarter known as "the Jewry;" the spot appropriated to them in Leicester being the vicinity of St. Nicholas' Church.

Expulsion of the Jews from Leicester.

Soon after he became Earl, the burgesses besought the young Simon de Montfort to remove this thorn in the flesh of their spiritual susceptibilities, whereupon he, sharing their dislike and contempt for the strangers, issued a Charter expelling the whole of the Jews from the town, "in my time, and in the time of my heirs, to the end of the world," as the quaint and thorough-going edict ran. This was about 1231. But the poor outcasts were unexpectedly befriended. Simon's aunt, the widowed Countess of Winchester, who possessed estates in the neighbourhood, had compassion on them, and invited them to settle on her lands where, following the advice of good Bishop Grosstête, the family friend and counsellor, they were kept at hard labour on the land, and supplied with coarse food. This incident shows the bigoted animosity felt for the Jews at this period, mingled, no doubt, with dislike of their foreign extraction and jealousy of the wealth they too often amassed by their hard and usurious dealings.

Character of Simon de Montfort.

Apart from this instance of persecution, which he no doubt regarded as a religious duty, the brilliant and eventful career of Simon de Montfort will always cast a reflected glory upon the town of Leicester where, as in the wider sphere of national affairs, he devoted himself with never-failing energy

and singleness of purpose to large and beneficial aims. He championed the weak, enlarged the liberties of the people, and headed the Barons of England in their successful stand against the encroachments and tyranny of the Crown. He was beloved and lamented by rich and poor; and in an uncanonized fashion his memory was revered in England as that of a saint or martyr, while miraculous virtues were ascribed to his relics. In the quaint and picturesque language of the charming little work by the late Mr. W. Napier Reeve entitled *The Chronicles of the Castle and of the Earls of Leicester*, "his memory lasted long, for the people of the land had trusted greatly in him, as the protector of the oppressed, the father of the poor, the saviour of his country, and the avenger of the Church. And the clergy called him 'Sir Simon the Righteous,' but the common people called him 'Sir Simon the King.'"

CHAPTER VI.

Edmund Crouchback, First Earl of Lancaster and Leicester A.D. 1265.

AFTER the death of Simon de Montfort at the battle of Evesham in 1265, his confiscated titles and estates were conferred by Henry III. upon his own younger son Edmund Crouchback Earl of Lancaster, whom he also created Earl of Leicester; and thenceforth until the end of the fourteenth century these two titles were united in the person of a member of the royal family of England, so that the lives and destinies of our local Earls were merged in the National History of the period.

Assizes first held in the Castle.

The memory of Earl Edmund is chiefly interesting to the people of Leicester from his dedication of the great Hall of the Castle to the purposes of a Court of Justice. It had been decreed by his brother King Edward I. that the appointed Judges of the realm should periodically journey through the country to administer justice in every chief town, and the Earl now commanded that whenever they visited Leicester they should dispense their judgments within the walls of his Castle. This has remained the custom up to the present day. Shortly after this time, about the year 1300, it is recorded that a gaol was first established in Leicester. This

probably consisted in the use, for this purpose, of an underground apartment or vault of the Castle, whence imprisoned criminals could easily be brought into the presence of the judges, and who, if condemned, were quickly executed upon the Mount, or in the centre of the Court-yard. A flight of steps a few yards from the great Hall of Justice connects this with the adjoining vault beneath, which is still in existence, and is popularly known as "John of Gaunt's Cellar."

The Great Charter, granted 1278.

In the time of Edmund Crouchback, and mainly through his influence with the King, the "Great Charter" as it is called, was granted to the inhabitants of Leicester in the year 1278, whereby the laws and procedure of the Court of Portmanmote were reformed and amended.

Earl Edmund did not pass much of his time in Leicester, and died in 1299. We are told that his surname of Crouchback did not apply to any personal deformity, but to the adoption of a badge representing a Cross which he wore on the back of his garment, in fulfilment of a crusading vow.

In connection with this period it has been a matter of conjecture and almost of dispute among antiquarians whether or not the mortal remains of the good Queen Eleanor passed through Leicester on their way from Clipstone in Notts, where she died, to the town of Northampton, the nearest known resting-place on their sad progress to her tomb at Westminster. The exact route was never recorded, but those who are anxious to claim this honour for Leicester point to the existence of a stone cross of some importance, which was standing in the sixteenth century at the end of Sanvey Gate, close to the north entrance of the town, through which the procession would probably have passed. In the absence of any definite knowledge on the point, however, we are hardly

justified in assuming the probability of the event, and some tradition of it would have been preserved, as in other places.

THOMAS, SECOND EARL OF LANCASTER AND LEICESTER, A.D. 1299.

Edmund Crouchback was followed in the year 1299 by his son Thomas of Lancaster, who headed the Barons in their frequent outbreaks of discontent caused by the infatuation of King Edward II. for his unpopular favourites, Piers Gaveston and Hugh de Spenser; and in consequence of his disloyalty the lustre of our line of Earls is now for a moment dimmed by the tragic fate that closed his unfortunate career.

Thomas of Lancaster did not often reside at his Castle of Leicester, but in the year 1305 he entertained there his uncle King Edward I., on which occasion the latter granted a Charter empowering the burgesses to hold a second Fair, in the month of June. After the death of this monarch his son the young King Edward II., with his Court, passed through Leicester on his return from Scotland, whither he had accompanied his father on his last journey; and he was here again in 1310 and the following year on his way to and from the North, where events were fast approaching the crisis which led to the defeat of the English at Bannockburn in 1314. Queen Isabella too, made an independent sojourn at Leicester Castle in 1309, and gifts of wine and food supplied to her according to custom on royal visits, are recorded in the Borough Accounts for that year.

Meeting of the King and Barons at the Castle.

In 1318 the Pope despatched two Legates to England charged to use their utmost influence towards healing the troubles into which the King's weak conduct had plunged him, and with this object a meeting of the conflicting parties

took place at Leicester in the great Hall of the Castle, at which were present the King, Queen, and Cardinal Legates with brilliant retinues, as well as a formidable muster of the disaffected Barons who had rallied to the support of their leader the Earl of Lancaster.

The result of the meeting appeared to be successful. A reconciliation was effected between the royal cousins, and the fine old Hall resounded with the acclamations of the assembled guests, who were feasted and entertained with every token of mutual joy and satisfaction.

But the breach proved too wide and deep to be permanently healed; and differences before long again arising between them, the Earl of Lancaster once more took up arms against the King. And now, losing the support of many of the Barons in consequence of his ignoble attempt to intrigue with the Scottish King, the unfortunate Earl found himself forsaken in battle by his former friends, and a prisoner in the King's hands. He was thereupon condemned as a traitor by the group of angry Barons assembled in judgment upon him,—among whom sat the King himself,—and was finally beheaded as a traitor in his own distant Castle of Pontefract in the year 1322; eight-and-twenty of his followers at the same time suffering death in a more degrading form by being hanged, drawn, and quartered.

Fall and execution of Earl Thomas, 1322.

Henry, Third Earl of Lancaster and Leicester, A.D. 1322.

The memory of the gloomy and shameful death of Thomas Earl of Lancaster was soon, however, to be blotted out by the happier fortune and enduring deeds of his successor, whose name is associated with the commencement of the

most brilliant and interesting period of the history of Leicester in the Middle Ages.

Leaving no son the disgraced Earl was succeeded by his brother Henry of Lancaster, who commenced his career with the possession of very little beyond the empty titles of his unfortunate predecessor, for at the death of the latter, his estates had been seized in forfeit by the King; and it was not until the final supremacy of Queen Isabella and her party, and the accession of the young Prince Edward to the throne, that the Earl of Lancaster succeeded in obtaining the reversal of the Act of Attainder which had been passed against his brother Thomas, and was allowed to enter into possession of the vast wealth and landed property of the Earls of Leicester. He was now, however, restored to all the family honours, and was also created guardian to the young King Edward III., under the Regency of the Queen.

But his troubles were not yet over, for in the ensuing struggle between the Barons and Queen Isabella, who was now completely under the influence of Roger Mortimer, Earl Henry was made prisoner, and compelled to pay a large ransom to save his life. On the fall and death of Mortimer, however, he was released; and being well advanced in middle life, and weary of the fickle fortunes of court and camp, he betook himself to his Castle at Leicester, there to spend in retirement and peaceful occupations the fleeting autumn of his days.

The Earl a prisoner.

To this determination of the Earl, Leicester owes much of the interest and importance which has since attached to the neighbourhood of the Castle, and it is to be hoped that the inhabitants of our ancient town will never cease to cherish the memory of one who, as patron and resident in the far-distant Past, did so much to benefit and beautify it.

His residence in our town.

The two most important local works of Henry Earl of Lancaster were the erection of the Trinity, or as it was originally called, the "New" Hospital, and of the now vanished Collegiate Church of St. Mary, close by it. Both lay outside the Castle boundaries, and were enclosed within a space of about four acres, surrounded by strongly fortified walls and watch-towers. This was called the New Worke, and was entered from the eastern side by the fine gateway in Oxford Street, which also formed a barrack for the armed men who patrolled the walls, and is now called the Magazine Gateway, from its use in later times as a storehouse for arms. This has since been restored and re-faced, but the inside chambers for the most part remain unaltered. There was also an entrance to

The Newarke.

MAGAZINE GATEWAY.

the New Worke from the south wall of the enclosure, which ran towards the river from just below the angle of Oxford Street with the smaller thoroughfare now called Mill Lane; and portions of the original wall-material may still be seen in the face of the dwellings along the line of this street.

Some authorities place the erection of the Newarke walls and Magazine Gateway as late as the time of John of Gaunt; and there may be good grounds for this opinion, as the latter is known to have improved and added to the Castle itself, as well as to the Collegiate Church of the Newarke.

Trinity, or New Hospital, built in 1331.

The Trinity Hospital or Bede House was built in the year 1331, and at the outset was endowed by Earl Henry for fifty old men, with five women as nurses; all being placed under the management of a Master, four Chaplains, and two Clerks.

TRINITY HOSPITAL BEFORE ALTERATION IN 1790.

It was afterwards enlarged and completed by his son the Duke of Lancaster, and "in it" says Nichols the historian, "were maintained 100 infirm poor persons, the third part of them to be women; and also ten other poor women, to be keepers and washers of the said 100."

The original building, which survived till the reign of George III., was exceedingly plain and featureless, being evidently intended simply for practical use as a shelter for the aged poor. It was spacious and roomy however, and suffered in this respect upon its restoration in 1790, when the front wall, which projected somewhat beyond the line of the Chapel was demolished, and the row of arches on the south side of the wide interior corridor was bricked up in order to serve as the outer wall; thus narrowing the corridor and spoiling its appearance by throwing into it the line of cabins on that side. This arrangement served the purposes of the hospital for more than a hundred years, but it has lately been superseded by the erection of a more roomy

TRINITY HOSPITAL AS ALTERED IN 1790.

UPPER (OR WOMEN'S) FLOOR TRINITY HOSPITAL, 1891.

and handsome structure, small portions only of the old building being left besides the Chapel, which retains its old walls and most of its internal features after careful restoration.

The College Church of the Newarke.

The Collegiate Church of St. Mary, the companion work of Henry Earl of Lancaster, was also but partially completed during his lifetime, and was intended as his private chapel and mausoleum, the Castle Church having probably become inadequate to the needs and importance of the family. It will ever be a matter of the deepest regret to all lovers of ancient Leicester that, with the exception of one small piece of masonry still existing in a cellar under the residence of the late Mrs. E. S. Ellis,* which is known to have been its site, not a single trace nor record of the features of this once beautiful and important building now remains to remind us of the greatest work of love and piety with which these princely Earls enriched the town. The College Church of the Newarke, though

GROUND FLOOR (WITH PORRIDGE POT) TRINITY HOSPITAL, 1891.

* As this residence is now likely to be taken down for the proposed enlargement of the adjoining Municipal Technical and Art Schools, it is probable that other traces of the foundations and general plan of the Collegiate Church may be brought to light.

probably not very large, was "exceeding fair," and historians tell us that in time its fame became so great that pilgrims flocked to it from all parts of England. The College consisted of a Dean, twelve Canons, thirteen Vicars choral, three Clerks and one Verger, "the same also to be a porter of the College," and all were maintained out of the munificent endowment provided by the Earl. We can well imagine the fine old soldier of fortune occupying the peaceful remnant of his days and making provision for the future of his soul, in arranging to appropriate a substantial part of his great revenues to these pious works, which doubtless he took a keen interest in planning and carrying out in as complete and ornate a manner as possible. And we can picture too, the curiosity with which the admiring townsfolk would cluster round, to watch the progress of the rising structures, in the benefits of one of which they and their descendants were so long to participate.

The Castle and its hospitalities.

Henry of Lancaster also much enlarged and improved the residential part of the Castle; and here, on several occasions, he entertained his youthful cousin King Edward III. with his consort the fair Philippa, although it is stated by some authorities that the prudent young queen preferred to lodge at the Abbey, and not to court disaster by disregarding the ancient prophecy attending the presence of crowned heads in the Castle of Leicester. Be this as it may, many were the stately gatherings and lavish entertainments held by the Earl in the great Hall of the Castle, now at the height of its importance and prosperity. These were graced by the presence of the noblest and fairest in the land, whose sumptuous apparel gave colour and brilliancy to the sombre interior, while their imagination was stirred by the music of the minstrels and the romantic songs of the troubadours whose

voices, from the gallery above, floated or rang through the Hall as they improvised their kindling lays of love or war.

Many, also, were the splendid tournaments held in the tilting-ground within the Castle precincts, to which flocked the flower of English chivalry, when the old Earl, the centre of a brilliant company, would sit watching with eager interest the skill and prowess of the youthful Knights, lamenting no doubt after the manner of age, that feats of chivalry in these degenerate times were far inferior to those which he himself had taken part in or witnessed, in the days when he was young.

The most important and notable of these tournaments took place at the marriage of the Earl's grand-daughter, the Lady Maude of Lancaster, with Duke William of Bavaria, son of the Emperor of Germany; on which occasion the feasting and entertainments would no doubt be shared by a large proportion of the townspeople, to whom the spectacle of their lord's splendour was by no means unfamiliar.

The outlay upon the every-day life of the Earl's family and dependents at this period was enormous, as shown by various items quoted by Stowe and Nichols, and originally extracted from the books of the household. The free and open hospitality maintained at the Castle necessitated a daily profusion of food; while the silk, furs, jewels, and various-coloured cloths for the personal apparel of the inmates; the silver dishes, the wines, the carpetings and wax candles; the liveries and fees of the retainers of all degrees,—amounted to immense sums. The number of horses usually kept in the Earl's stables, according to Mr. Thompson, reached many hundreds; while the hawks, hounds, and herds of deer each required their separate staff of keepers, and greatly swelled

the list of expenses. The Castle Farm or Grange lay at a little distance in a south-easterly direction, probably in or beyond the thoroughfare still called Grange Lane.

But by and bye, the infirmities of age began to press heavily on the good old Earl. Dim of sight and weary of limb, his strength grew less and less, his hold on life relaxed, and in the year 1345 he peacefully breathed his last amid his sorrowing people, and was laid to rest in his new Collegiate Church of the Newarke. The funeral ceremony was of great magnificence, and was attended by the King, Queen, and a host of distinguished nobles and ecclesiastics.

Death of the Earl, A.D. 1345.

Henry, First Duke of Lancaster and Earl of Leicester, A.D. 1345.

The great Earl was succeeded in his title and estates by his son Henry Grismond, surnamed Wryneck, who had spent the years of his early manhood in fighting for the King of England's cause in France, distinguishing himself by a series of brilliant enterprises which place him foremost among the warriors even of that chivalric period. Soon after the siege of Calais, on which occasion he had commanded under his own flag 800 men-at-arms and 2000 archers, he was rewarded for his long continued services by the title of Duke; and in the year 1349, when Edward III. instituted the Order of the Garter, he was among the first to be invested with it. He was likewise made Admiral of the King's Fleet, for his distinguished action at sea.

After peace had been concluded with France, and the country was for a time at rest, the Duke of Lancaster took up his abode at Leicester Castle, where he spent much of the remainder of his life. Here, probably, he was sometimes

visited by the King's younger son, Prince John of Gaunt, who loved and afterwards married his cousin Lady Blanche of Lancaster, the Duke's youngest daughter, whose beauty and sweetness so inspired him that he is said to have written of her—

> "Lord! it maketh my heart light,
> When I think on that sweet wight
> That is so seemly on to see;
> And wish to God it might so be
> That she should hold me for her Knight,
> My lady, that's so fair and bright;"

Like Earl Henry, his father, the Duke of Lancaster had the good of the town much at heart; and he obtained from the King the grant of a Market, and also of another Fair, to be held at Michaelmas. Besides doubling the foundation of Trinity Hospital, as before stated, he also greatly enriched the College Church of the Newarke, and added to its completeness by building several chantry-houses in the immediate neighbourhood for the accommodation of its prebendal clergy. He was known in Leicester as the "Good Duke," and his fame was great from one end of England to the other. Mr. Thompson says, in his History of Leicester, "No subject of England ever obtained equal powers and honours with this nobleman. His advancement was marked and singular, unexampled, and of almost incredible splendour. He was the prince of the Chevaliers of the Middle Ages." We may here remark that in addition to his titles of Duke of Lancaster and Earl of Leicester, he was also Earl of Lincoln, of Derby, of Grismond, and of Ferrers.

The "Good Duke."

But his greatness and honours and all the goodwill of his friends and dependents could not avail against the fell hand of physical disease, which the insanitary condition of towns

His death from the Plague, A.D. 1361.

then rendered so frequent and so fatal. The Plague had raged in Leicester some years before, as in most other parts of England; and now, in 1361, another terrible visitation of it swept over the country, in which the Good Duke was attacked and carried off while yet in ripe middle age, and surrounded by all the comforts and luxuries that the times could provide. He had made his Will during the previous year, dated from the Castle of Leicester, and had left some curious directions for his funeral, which were duly carried out amid the general mourning of the people. He had ordered that his body, after lying for two days in the adjoining parish church of St. Mary, (to the curate of which he bequeathed his best horse,) should be buried in the Collegiate Church of the Newarke, near the remains of his father by the side of the high altar, "without pomp of armed men, or horses covered, or other vanities." But the ceremony was to be very imposing, nevertheless. "Five great tapers, each of 100lbs. weight, and four great mortars," were to be borne in the procession; "fifty poor people, (whereof twenty-five clothed in white, and twenty-five in blue,) bearing those torches." The King, Queen, Prince, (the Black Prince,) and his brother, besides other noble relatives, were to be bidden to the funeral. He bequeathed fifty pieces of linen "to be divided among as many poor women at the time, if so many could be found, *but no expense among the country people.*" His executors were to finish the Collegiate Church, with the Deanery and prebendal houses he had placed around it, and to redress and make satisfaction for all wrongs done by him, as soon as they could be ascertained. "And thus died," says Barnes the historian, "a man more worthy to live for ever, even the great, valiant, and liberal prince, Henry Plantagenet."

His will and funeral.

CHAPTER VII.

William of Bavaria, Earl of Leicester, A.D. 1361.

HENRY Duke of Lancaster left no son, and the Castle was now for many years untenanted by its owner; for the titles and estates of the Earls of Leicester were conferred upon the Elector William of Bavaria, the husband of the Duke's eldest daughter Maude; while John of Gaunt, who had married Blanche, his younger daughter was, in her right, created Duke of Lancaster. The Castle empty.

The titles were thus for a time divided; but William of Bavaria and his wife both dying early and without children, John of Gaunt was allowed also to succeed to the Earldom of Leicester, and for a second time they were united in the person of a son of the King of England.

John of Gaunt, Second Duke of Lancaster and Earl of Leicester, A.D. 1377.

The marriage of John of Gaunt with the Lady Blanche of Lancaster had taken place in the year 1359, when he was only nineteen years of age, and his bride sixteen; but their wedded happiness was destined to be of but short duration, for only ten years afterwards, during which time the French wars of Edward III. had compelled the absence of the Duke

for long periods from their home in London, the Duchess Blanche was attacked and carried off by the "great Pestilence" which devastated England in the year 1369. She was buried with much pomp in St. Paul's Cathedral, sincerely mourned by her husband, who never fully recovered her loss. Blanche of Lancaster was the mother of Henry Bolingbroke, afterwards King Henry IV.

The Duke afterwards returned to France, where he distinguished himself in various sieges and battles; and in 1372, he married as his second wife Constance, eldest daughter of the King of Castille and Leon. He remained abroad in active service until a truce was concluded between the English and French kings in 1374, when he returned to London.

John of Gaunt, Duke of Lancaster, becomes also Earl of Leicester, A.D. 1377.

It was in the year 1377, the same year which closed the long reign of King Edward III., that the death of the Elector of Bavaria placed the Earldom of Leicester in the hands of John of Gaunt, Duke of Lancaster; and great must have been the rejoicing in the old borough, when it became known that the long deserted rooms of the Castle were once more to be opened, and that it was about to become, as in former times, the frequent residence of a prince of the blood-royal, and the seat of a magnificent hospitality. After this date, indeed, John of Gaunt spent much of his time both at Leicester and Kenilworth, which seem to have been his favourite country abodes; but he had important castles also at Lincoln, Monmouth, Hertford, Pontefract, and other places. The number of his estates and residences seems almost incredible, and amply justified the immense power and influence which he exercised. Nor were his official appointments less remarkable. After the death of Edward III., he was appointed with

His wealth and properties.

his brother the Duke of York and Gloucester, guardian to the young King Richard II., his nephew, then only ten years of age. At the coronation of the latter, which was celebrated with great magnificence, John of Gaunt officiated as High Steward of England, in right of his Earldom of Leicester,—carried the Sword of State, in virtue of his Dukedom of Lancaster,—and performed the duties of Carver to the King at the Coronation Feast, as the special privilege of his title of Earl of Lincoln. Like most of his predecessors, all of whom in turn offer to us distinctive features of interest, so John of Gaunt, the last of the great Earls of Leicester, may claim our sympathy and respect as the patron of poetic literature and the friend of religious reform. These were the days of Chaucer and of Wycliffe; and it is creditable to his intelligence and culture that the wealth and influence of the Earl were employed in promoting the labours of men such as these, whose work has been productive of results so manifold and enduring.

His official titles.

Patron of Wycliffe and Chaucer.

The motive which actuated the Duke of Lancaster in befriending the reformer Wycliffe, whose theological tenets he never in the slightest degree adopted, is ascribed to a genuine admiration of his profound scholarship and exemplary life; and it is more than probable that the protesting voice of the great preacher has often echoed through the lofty aisles of St. Mary's Church in denunciation of the corruptions of Rome and the clergy, or risen in appeal for a simpler and purer mode of life among all classes when, from time to time, in answer to the call of his friend and patron he would consent to leave his quiet rectory at Lutterworth and ride along the forest lanes towards the bustling town, to sojourn awhile amid the courtly life of the Castle.

Wycliffe's preachers.

In addition to his own preaching and writings Wycliffe successfully spread his opinions by means of a following of poor priests and scholars, whom he educated in his doctrines and sent forth to visit and preach in the manner of modern missionaries. Of these, we are told that John Smith, a layman, and one Waytestaffe, a priest, of Leicester, aroused the zeal and righteous indignation of the townspeople by their exposition of the abuses existing in the Church. These two men were accustomed to repair to the "Town's end," which was near the Spital, on the Belgrave Road, to expound their principles; and so great was the attraction of their preaching, and so numerous their converts among all classes, that the ecclesiastics at last interfered, and procured their expulsion from the town.

William Swynderby.

But the current towards Reform was now too strong to be thus easily checked; and after the death of Wycliffe in 1384, the cause was locally taken up by a religious enthusiast named Swynderby, who dwelt in a solitary retreat among the woods outside the western walls of the town. Occasionally this recluse would issue forth and enter the gates, his strange appearance and rugged eloquence quickly attracting crowds of interested listeners. He also preached on several occasions from the pulpits of St. Martin's and St. Margaret's; always in a strain of fiery protest against the outward shows of religion, and of exhortation to a more sincere and practical piety among the people, vanity in the women and covetousness among the men being the vices specially singled out for rebuke. He also instructed his hearers in the particular tenets of the Lollards, which consisted mainly in disbelief in the doctrine of transubstantiation, and in open enmity to the practice of image worship.

Yet another and more humble agitator helped to fan the flame of religious reform in Leicester, in the person of a female fanatic named Matilda, who dwelt alone in a rude shelter in the burial ground of St. Peter's Church, whence she frequently came forth to pour out strange words of warning and appeal to the curious crowds who flocked to hear her.

Matilda the "poor anchoress."

Thus the movement widened. Priests as well as laymen joined it. The whole town was stirred; and the reformers, both wise and crazy, grew bold, and predicted the speedy triumph of their opinions. But the danger to the Church was now too grave to be lightly dealt with; the ecclesiastical authorities dared no longer ignore the situation, and at the end of October 1389, the papal wrath suddenly descended upon the district, and shattered the rising hopes of the reformers. Courtenay, Archbishop of Canterbury, as the avenger of the Church, presented himself with short notice at the Abbey, and solemnly declared the whole of the town under Interdict until the leaders of the revolt should be captured and brought to judgment.

And now a sad collapse occurred. Most of the heretical leaders, including Swynderby, Smith, and the devotee Matilda, crushed and terrified by the overwhelming reality of the Church's power, recanted the main items of their teaching. They were sentenced to do full penance, barefoot with "sheet and candle," both in St. Margaret's Church and in the Saturday Market; after which, with this brand of shame upon them, they were allowed to resume their ordinary occupations. Waytestaffe and some others managed to evade the search of the priests, and altogether to escape the wrath of the Church; while one Roger Goldsmith, who died while the

Collapse of the movement.

town lay under the fatal ban, was denied the right of burial, and his corpse was flung to decay upon a patch of waste ground near the spot where the Great Meeting Chapel in Bond Street now stands, the place being for centuries afterwards called "The Goldsmith's Grave."

Thus perished this early local movement towards the English Reformation; a twofold movement, having for its aims the purification of the Romish Church and its doctrines, and the revival of personal religion among all classes; the latter being largely contributed to by the searching self-discipline insisted upon by the Friars Preachers. These had now been settled in England for more than a century and a half, and had taken their place as one of the recognised religious forces of the period.

Geoffry Chaucer.

The friendship and patronage extended by John of Gaunt to the poet Chaucer commenced in their early youth, when the latter was for a time attached to the King's Court in London, as page or esquire. The young Prince conceived a strong personal affection for him; and through a life-long friendship endeavoured to advance the fortunes of his protegé, by means of his purse and vast influence. In the days when the coveted hand of the Lady Blanche was to be won, Geoffry Chaucer had been made the confidant of his hopes and fears; and during the short but happy years of their marriage, the poet was frequently among the household of the Duke of Lancaster in his magnificent Palace of the Savoy on the banks of the Thames, given to him by his father King Edward III., and which he had stored with works of art and treasures of every description. In Chaucer's poem entitled the *Book of the Duchess; the Death of the Lady Blanche* he alludes, in allegorical fashion, to the transcendent

Early friendship with John of Gaunt.

beauty and virtues of the young wife whose loss had so grievously afflicted his patron. The only direct connection, however, that the town of Leicester may assume with the writer of the *Canterbury Tales* and the *Flower and the Leaf*, is the possibility that, in after years, Chaucer sometimes visited the Duke at the Castle, where his nature-loving soul may have received fresh inspiration from the beauty and verdure of the neighbouring forest scenery.

On the high ground overlooking the town on the north-west side, in the estate now known as the "Bird's Nest Farm," is an extensive spinney, in the tall trees of which the rooks for centuries have had their habitation. Around it lies a clearly defined moat, and on the island thus formed are to be seen remains of the foundations of a building which tradition has named "John of Gaunt's Summer House," and which imagination readily peoples with forms and fancies incidental to the seasons of leisure in the life of the last of our princely Earls.

"John of Gaunt's Summer House,"

Another and more important country or hunting seat belonging to the Earldom of Leicester and Lancaster was the Castle of Earl Shilton, beyond Leicester Forest and near Hinckley, and hither the later Earls frequently repaired to enjoy the pleasures of sylvan sport. Of this lesser baronial residence a single mound, and a spot called the "Castle-yard" are alone left to tell the tale of their country life amid hawks and hounds and the rude pleasures of the chase.

Castle of Earl Shilton

Mr. W. Kelly tells us that John of Gaunt was a great patron of the art of minstrelsy; and that his second wife, the Duchess Constance, was also passionately fond of music. She had improved the prevailing taste by introducing singers from abroad, and after a time their number became so great,

that regulations had to be made for preserving order among them. Her husband therefore founded by Charter his famous "Court of Minstrels," presided over by an officer termed the "King of the Minstrels," who was elected annually, together with subordinate stewards, from their number. John of Gaunt is also said to have introduced from Spain the Morris or Morisco dance which, intended at first as an entertainment solely for the Court and upper classes, soon became generally known and adopted as a national pastime.

As guardian to the boy-king Richard II., John of Gaunt performed his duties with a zeal and faithfulness which in after years were but ill-repaid by the vain and fickle young monarch. In truth, although possessing sterling qualities and much intellectual capability, the great Duke was not a national favourite, though always loved and honoured by his people of Leicester. In London, he was disliked and partially shunned by the nobles and clergy, from his patronage of the heretic Wycliffe; and in fact during the latter years of the Reformer's life the Duke had found it politic to withdraw much of his former support. But the chief cause of his unpopularity with the lower classes was from the constant levying of taxes to carry on the war in France, and to meet the extravagance of King Richard's Court, for both of which they ignorantly held the Duke responsible. In the year 1381, when the hated Poll-tax was imposed throughout the kingdom, the popular discontent reached its climax. The people of London rose in tens of thousands under Wat Tyler's flag of rebellion and, marching to the Palace of the Savoy,—the "fairest structure in England," says the historian Nichols,—a furious mob of rioters proceeded to sack and burn it, thus to wreak their vengeance on the supposed cause of their grievances.

The unpopularity of John of Gaunt in London.

Burning of the Savoy Palace.

The news of the attack on John of Gaunt's Palace spread far and wide. Messengers reached Leicester late one evening, and hastening to the Mayor warned him that an armed body of men had already left London, and was hurrying through the country in order to destroy the Duke's outlying castles. This mob, they said, might be expected at the gates of Leicester before the next noon, on their way to plunder and lay waste the Castle. In great haste a meeting of the burgesses was summoned, and a proclamation straightway made from the High Cross and the town Gates, calling upon all loyal citizens to arm themselves and to muster by dawn of the following day upon the Gallowtree Hill, on the road to Market Harborough. At the appointed hour the rising sun shone upon a body of twelve hundred trusty defenders of their lord and town, who awaited with anxious and determined mien the arrival of the insurgent mob. But the alarm proved false; neither that nor the succeeding day brought to view any band of aggressive strangers, and the excitement gradually subsided. Soon after however, the Duke's wardrobe-keeper from London arrived in haste at the Castle, and quickly loading several waggons with valuables, set out to deposit them for safety at the Abbey; but in the Abbey Gate the little escort was met by the Abbot and part of his convent, who abruptly refused the expected shelter. This was partly from fear for their own House, should it become known that the Duke's treasures were hidden there, and partly perhaps from a secret feeling of resentment and disloyalty towards the former patron of the hated Wycliffe. The horses' heads were therefore turned, and after some anxious consultation the College of St. Mary's Church consented to receive the valuables in that building, for protection in case of an

Fears entertained for the safety of Leicester Castle.

attack upon the Castle. Fortunately, however, all fear of this was soon at an end, and the town resumed its wonted serenity.

Flight of the Duchess Constance.

In the meantime the Duchess Constance had fled northward for a safer shelter in her husband's Castle at Pontefract, and had actually experienced the mortification of being refused admittance there; the terrified and time-serving retainers fearing to provoke the anger of the people by opening the gates to her little cavalcade. Her litter therefore proceeded another seven miles by torch-light to the Duke's neighbouring castle at Knaresborough, where the loyalty due to their master's family prevented a repetition of such base and cowardly conduct. Here the Duchess remained until the return of the Duke from Scotland, where he had been staying at the time of the London riots, and since harboured in safety by certain friendly noblemen.

Deaths of the Duchess Constance and the Countess of Hereford.

In the year 1392, the Duke being absent in France with his eldest son Henry Bolingbroke, lately created Earl of Hereford, the Castle was suddenly plunged into lamentation and mourning by the death of the Duchess Constance. She was followed to the grave only a few days later by the young Mary de Bohun, wife of the absent heir, who had taken up her abode at the Castle, maybe to share with her mother-in-law the dreary days of waiting for the return of their lords. The remains of the Duchess of Lancaster were laid in the Collegiate Church, by the side of the high altar; and a marble tomb was erected over them, "with an image of brass, like a queen," says Nichols. The Countess of Hereford was buried under the chancel of the same church; and it is recorded that in the year 1563 "a very fair and stately monument of a lady, curiously wrought, but of no note or

mark," was standing there. Some authorities have concluded that this was the tomb of Mary de Bohun, Countess of Hereford, and that it was afterwards removed to the Chapel of Trinity Hospital, the chancel of which still contains a tomb with the recumbent figure of a lady with a standing cape, necklace, and jewel pendant. From certain sculptural details, however, it is more likely that this represents the person of an earlier Countess of Leicester. King Henry IV. did, in after years, place a monument over the grave of his mother in the College Church, but it probably shared the fate of many other valuable relics at the final destruction of the edifice about the year 1690.

Banishment of Henry Bolingbroke.

By reason of the death of these two ladies, the Duke of Lancaster and his son returned from their campaign in France to an empty and desolate home; and troubles now seemed to thicken around them. The partly-veiled jealousy and distrust showed them by the King at length resulted in a sentence of exile pronounced against Henry of Bolingbroke, after a duel with the Duke of Norfolk, each having accused the other of high treason. Coventry had been the place chosen for the fight, and the King was present as a spectator; but the duel had not proceeded far when he suddenly stopped it and straightway banished both combatants. This decree was a crushing blow to John of Gaunt, "time-honoured Lancaster," who dearly cherished his eldest son. He grieved sorely at his exile, grew moody and restless, and at length, worn out with continual mourning over the blighted prospects of the Earl he gradually pined away and died at his residence in Ely Place, Holborn, in the year 1399. He was buried by the side of his first wife, Blanche of Lancaster, in St. Paul's Church; and a costly monument from which de-

Death of John of Gaunt, 1399.

pended his lance and target, was erected to his memory, and survived until the destruction of the church in the Great Fire of London. A few years before his death he had married for his third wife Catherine Swynford, formerly a waiting-woman to the Duchess Blanche, and with whom he had early contracted an intimacy. She was sister to the wife of the poet Chaucer.

His Will.

By his Will dated the previous year from the Castle of Leicester, John of Gaunt requested the King his nephew to supervise the carrying out of his last wishes, and enjoined him, with the other executors, to be faithful to the trust, as he would have to answer to Almighty God "Who is King above all kings, and will render to every man a reward according to his deserts." He bequeathed to the King his best jewel; and two other jewels to his "most dear wife, Catherine Swynford." To his two daughters, married to the Kings of Portugal and of Castille, he left cups of gold; and to his son, Henry Bolingbroke, besides many other gifts, a golden chain, "with the name of God on each part of it," which had been given to him by his own mother Queen Philippa, and which he now desired that his son should keep with his blessing and the blessing of God. He also bequeathed his red garment of velvet, "embroidered with gold suns," to the "new Church of our Lady," at Leicester, and ordained the foundation of a chantry in the same Church, for the soul of his late wife, the Duchess Constance.

The King attended the funeral, which was conducted with great state; but he presently disregarded the final instructions of his uncle by seizing upon his possessions, and appropriating all the rich tapestries and hangings belonging to the Castle of Leicester. Retribution soon followed, for

while Richard was absent in Ireland, Henry of Bolingbroke suddenly returned to England, determined to test his position against that of the king in the confidence and affection of the people. He landed at Ravenspur in Yorkshire, whence he marched rapidly to London, and was joined on the way by crowds of supporters, hopeful of better times under the government of a son of the great Duke of Lancaster. By the time Bolingbroke reached London it is said that his followers amounted to the number of 60,000 men; and here he at once proclaimed himself Regent of the kingdom during the King's absence.

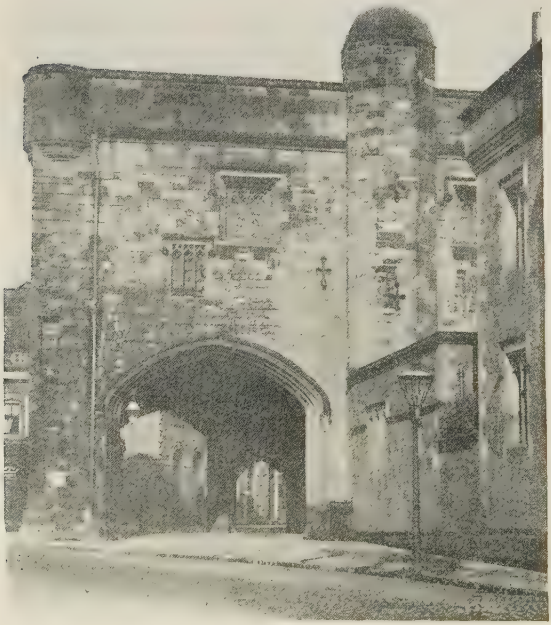
Landing of Henry Bolingbroke.

Richard now hurried back from Ireland in the hope of saving his crown; and Bolingbroke advanced northward to meet him. Flint Castle was the scene of their peaceable but momentous encounter, for here Richard recognizing his hopeless position, resigned his kingdom to Bolingbroke, and placed himself in his cousin's hands. The fallen monarch was honourably conducted to London; and on reaching the Capital Henry of Bolingbroke was speedily proclaimed King of England amid the acclamation of the people.

King Richard resigns the crown to Henry Bolingbroke, 1399.

"And now," as Mr. Reeve says in his delightful little work, before referred to, "there were no more Earls of Leicester, and thenceforth to none of that name belonged the Castle of Leicester, or the town thereof, or any possessions therein, or anything pertaining thereto, for they who were afterwards called Earls of Leicester, were strangers to the town and county of Leicester, and of no account therein. But, even as the glory of the sun is greatest at its setting, so did the grandeur of the last Earl of Leicester surpass that of all who had gone before him. For the Earldom ceased, not by the failure of male issue, as in the days of Henry, the

good Duke, or by attaint of treason as in the days of Simon, or by the hand of violence, as in the days of Thomas the Earl, but because the glory of the Earldom was merged in the greater glory of the Crown."



NEWARKE GATEWAY (FROM THE WEST).

CHAPTER VIII.

The Aspect of Leicester During the Middle Ages.

IT is interesting to picture to ourselves, as nearly as we may, the appearance and condition of Leicester during its occupation by the Earls and Dukes of Lancaster.

The Town Walls and Gates

The surrounding walls had been strongly rebuilt after the siege of the town in the days of Henry II., and upon their ancient lines; but the position of the gates had been at the same time, or possibly at an earlier period, somewhat altered. The East Gate had been removed from its conjectured Roman site lying further northwards along the line of the east wall, to the spot we now call "East Gates;" and the entrance from the south wall stood where the latter crossed the present Southgate Street between the ends of Friar and Millstone Lanes, instead of in its probable ancient position further eastwards. Thus, on the south side, the principal street of the town was entered from the Wigston Road, passing by the present Infirmary, and by Oxford and Southgate Streets, to the High Cross. At or near this point it joined the old Via Devana and proceeded to the North Gate, which retained its original position in a line with the end of the present Cumberland Street and Northgates Lane.

It may not be generally known that small portions of the east wall may yet be seen hidden away, and in some instances utilized, in some of the existing back buildings lying between Bond Street and Church Gate; and fragments of its foundations still occasionally obstruct the builder in digging the cellars for new houses or factories along this line. Some of the same ancient wall-material may also be observed in the lower part of the wall on the south side of Buttclose Lane, enclosing the ground occupied by the Great Meeting Chapel.

The line of the north wall, too, lying between Sanvey Gate and Cumberland Street, with the continuation eastwards of the latter, is still plainly traceable in the material of the lower courses of a less ancient wall evidently built along the old foundations, and appearing in places in the back courts of the first-named thoroughfare. A short blind street opening from Cumberland Street, near Elbow Lane, at a suddenly lower level of two or three feet, has long borne the name of City Wall Street. The ground levels near this corner of the walls, indeed, appear to have been neglected in later times, as there is a similar drop on the opposite side of the line further eastwards, where Olive Street joins it at a right angle.

The town was now also defended by a west wall, which many authorities consider had been altogether omitted from the Roman Station; and a few traces of it appeared until lately in the material used in parts of the base of a wall near the south end of Bath Lane, along which it would run, a West Gate having early been erected at the end of the West Bridge nearest the town. This approach was made additionally secure by a drawbridge.

The Town Gates.

The Town Gates were probably square and massive erections with gateways having pointed arches above them, and

each furnished with a strong portcullis. A turret staircase led to an upper story, and thence to a flat roof, with parapet and battlements, upon which the town guard or soldiers could post themselves to defend the gates below. These were regularly closed every evening from sunset to sunrise, and watchmen guarded them both day and night. If suspicious-looking strangers, or fugitives from justice, attempted to escape from the town, the "hue and cry" was raised, the gates were immediately shut, and the criminal secured,—unless sanctuary was afforded him by one of the neighbouring churches.

The Suburbs.

Beyond the East Gate were many houses, standing along the three roads that led to Belgrave, to Humberstone, and to St. Margaret's Church which lay, as before stated, outside the walls; while habitations were scattered the whole length of the distance between the North Gate and the North or "S. Sunday's" Bridge, clustering more thickly by the river-side near the latter, where dwelt the dyers and fullers of the wool trade. From the North Bridge, towards the Abbey, along the Abbey Gate and Lane, (so-called then as now,) they also occurred at wider intervals.

At some little distance outside the South Gate, amidst the green and open pastures known as the Cowhay or South Fields, and exactly on the site of the present Infirmary, stood the little church of St. Sepulchre. This was a dependence of St. Mary of the Castle, and here malefactors were shriven and buried, after suffering death by hanging, in the "Gallows Field," which is known to have existed in this neighbourhood.

Beyond the West Gate and the river there were probably at this time but few houses, as the forest lands approached more closely to the walls on this side of the town; but the

Grange at Westcotes, which has already been mentioned in connection with the Abbey, lay across the river at no great distance; and the Augustine Priory erected in the thirteenth century, close to the Bow Bridge, must have formed a prominent object in the eyes of a traveller issuing from the western gateway.

Principal streets and markets.

The main street of the town ran, as we have seen, between the North and South Gates, and was called the High Street (now High Cross Street). This was crossed in the centre of the town near the High Cross by a somewhat narrower thoroughfare running east and west, which we now call High Street. Between the High Cross and the East Gate this was used for and called the Swine's Market; while in the other direction leading to the West Gate it was named the Holt or Hot-gate, afterwards called Shambles Lane, and now St. Nicholas' Street.

Around the High Cross itself, a stone erection at, or close by, the intersection of these two main streets clustered, as in ancient Roman times, the principal life of the town, apart from the Castle; and here the Wednesday market was held, as of old. The "Saturday market," of the origin of which we have no definite knowledge, had very early occupied its present site; but instead of this being, as at the present day, in the very centre of the town, it was then in quite a remote corner of Leicester; and a spectator standing on the town walls which bounded the Market Place at the angle of the present Horsefair Street and Gallowtree Gate, would look out over green and open country, stretching far away in the direction of Knighton, Evington and Thurnby.

Population in the fourteenth century.

The population at the end of the fourteenth century amounted only to 5000 or 6000, and the number of streets and houses was small in proportion.

Along the High Street (now High Cross Street) were situated the principal dwellings and Inns, the names of the "Golden Lion" and the "Blue" or "White Boar" having been handed down. The houses were built of wood and plaster, with picturesque gables; and while some stood in rows, others occupied their own plot of orchard or garden, surrounded more or less by trees, which were still more abundant in the back streets. Here they threw their grateful shade over the more retired dwellings; and it would seem that the ancient Church of St. Clement's, in or near Northgate Street, and which was made over to the use of the Dominican Friars in the thirteenth century, was at one time almost hidden by foliage, from its appellation of "St. Clement's among the Ash trees."

Insanitary condition of the town,

The streets were unpaved, and the swine and poultry of the inhabitants wandered at will among them, until their partial restraint was ordered by the town authorities; while the accumulation of dirt and refuse of every description thrown out of the dwellings sometimes rendered them almost impassable. This, together with the uncleanly households and habits of the people, resulted in fearful ravages of the Plague and Black Death, which again and again decimated the population of England during the Middle Ages. In the year 1348, a terrible visitation of one of these maladies raged in Leicester and swept off upwards of 2000 souls,—more than a third of the population;* and another occurred in 1361, when the "Good Duke" of Lancaster perished among its many victims.

* Henry de Knighton relates that 380 persons died of this plague in the parish of St. Leonard's,—above 400 in St. Martin's, and above 700 in St. Margaret's alone; and in due proportion in the other parishes.

Wool trade.

Early in the thirteenth century the wool trade began to develope in Leicester, the fleeces being spun into worsted in the households, and afterwards woven by primitive hand-looms into blankets or a rough cloth, usually of a reddish-brown colour, called "russet." This was largely used for the garments of the people, and was also exported to other places by means of pack-horses and rudely fashioned waggons.

The Municipal body.

The internal government of the town had rested, from the time of its revival at the end of the twelfth century, in the hands of an Alderman, afterwards called Mayor, at the head of the "twenty-four" and the "forty-eight," as the two different sections of the municipal body were named. He was assisted in part of his duties by the appointment, in the middle of the fourteenth century, of two Chamberlains,—salaried officials whose work consisted in the administration of the town moneys, and the maintenance and repair of its gates, walls, ditches, pavements, and private properties, besides the collecting of all rents due to the Merchant Guild and the community. These accounts were yearly tendered for the inspection of the Mayor and certain auditors.

Defensive equipment of the people.

The unsettled character of the period rendered it necessary that the people should at all times be fully equipped for fighting, and it was therefore decreed by an Assize of Arms instituted throughout the country by King Henry II., that all burgesses in towns should be provided with a cap of iron, a lance, and a coat quilted with wool, tow, or some similar material, while the upper classes were to be armed in more elaborate fashion by State regulation according to their grade.

Archery.

The practice of archery was also required from all inhabitants of towns and villages during the Middle Ages, the use of the long bow having been introduced into England by

ST. MARY'S CHURCH. SOUTH AISLE.

(See page 117.)

Edward I. on his return from the Holy Land; and from that time, even until the reign of Charles I., King's orders and Acts of Parliament enforced its frequent and regular exercise among the people. Youths and men were required, under penalty, to appear at stated periods, each with his bow equal in length to his own height, and to exhibit his skill in front of the shooting Butts which, in Leicester, were raised upon a long narrow enclosure just inside the east wall of the town, near the spot now occupied by St. Margaret's Schools in Church Gate. This was called the Butt Close, and the mud walls of the enclosure were yet in existence within the memory of many persons still living; but the name of the adjoining street which connects Church Gate with East Bond Street,—the narrow "Buttclose Lane,"—is all that now remains to testify to the whereabouts of the Town Butts in Leicester.

The Churches standing at this period have been elsewhere enumerated, but it must be mentioned that, by the time at which we have arrived, the Castle Church of St. Mary had been more than once enlarged. The most important alteration probably took place sometime during the fourteenth century, when a new south aisle was added, of sufficiently ample dimensions to serve the purpose of a separate parish church, but having communication with the older part by the opening of some of the chancel arches, and the insertion of windows in the Early English clerestory of the nave. Both churches were probably under the ministrations of the same body of clergy, for Throsby the historian states, on the authority of Dr. Carte, (an antiquarian vicar of St. Martin's, living early in the eighteenth century,) that the Dean or Sacrist of the College was also vicar of the parish; and the

Additions to St. Mary's Church.

alterations in the nave and chancel were no doubt specially adapted for the hearing of High Mass in both parts at once. Opinions differ as to the probable date of this important addition, some authorities attributing it to John of Gaunt, during the latter part of the fourteenth century, while others believe it to have taken place as early as the end of the thirteenth century. The two naves still exist side by side in this beautiful and interesting church, which has since suffered many changes, and is at once the delight and despair of the antiquarian, from the conflicting suggestions of its patched and elaborate interior. Its enlargement and adaptation for parochial purposes may probably have been one of the main reasons which had induced Henry Earl of Lancaster to erect a separate church in the Newarke for his more exclusive use and family mausoleum.

St. Martin's Church.

Of the parish churches existing in Leicester at this period St. Martin's, also called "St. Crosse" was, from its size and central position, perhaps the most important. About the beginning of the fourteenth century this church was enlarged and beautified by the addition of a second and wider south aisle, the east end of which formed the Lady Chapel at whose altar officiated the priests of the important Guild of Corpus Christi. At the east end of the inner and earlier south aisle was the Chapel of St. Dunstan, while across the chancel which was rebuilt in 1409, and into which a large fresco painting of the Saint looked down, was the Chapel of St. Catherine, terminating the north aisle of the church. At the south-west end of the building was the Chapel of St. George, and probably not far from the richly-carved Rood Screen and Loft which divided the chancel from the nave, and which was adorned with the customary large crucifix in its centre,

and the images of the Virgin and St. John on either hand, was the Rood Chapel, also containing a large Rood or Cross above its altar, where offerings were made by the people, said to amount annually to ten or twelve pounds, a very substantial sum in those days.

OLD BUILDING (SIDE) HICHCROSS STREET.

Connected with St. Martin's is said to have been a chantry, founded in the reign of Edward III. by William Humberston and John Ive the younger for the maintenance of four priests to say mass in the church and to pray for the souls of the founders. The existence of a fine apartment in the back of an ancient house in High Cross Street nearly facing Town Hall (or St. Martin's) Lane, with a range of window lights formerly containing a series of ecclesiastical subjects in painted glass, has given rise to the supposition that this was the Chantry-house belonging to it. It seems equally or more probable

that it was simply the dwelling of some wealthy and prominent citizen; and from the initials R.W. shown on two of the glass panels, it may have been that of one of two Roger Wigstons, successive members of a very important family in Leicester during the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, either of whom is quite likely to have embellished his dwelling with objects of art and luxury. The apartment is now out of sight from the street, as the house was re-fronted more than a century ago; and the glass was removed many years since upon a change of owners, and purchased by the Leicestershire Archæological Society.*

During the period we have been considering, St. Nicholas' Church had also undergone important alterations, the earliest and most interesting features of which were the Norman tower and the south door, and somewhat later, the beautiful Early English pillar with detached shafts standing in the chancel, which had been rebuilt in the thirteenth century.

The Church of All Saints or "All Hallowes" had been beautified by its fine western Norman doorway; and at a later period, by its high interior tower-arch and elaborately-carved thirteenth century font; and doubtless the small Churches of St. Peter and St. Leonard, and possibly St. Michael, had each received their share of restoration and improvement.

St. Margaret's enlarged in the fifteenth century.

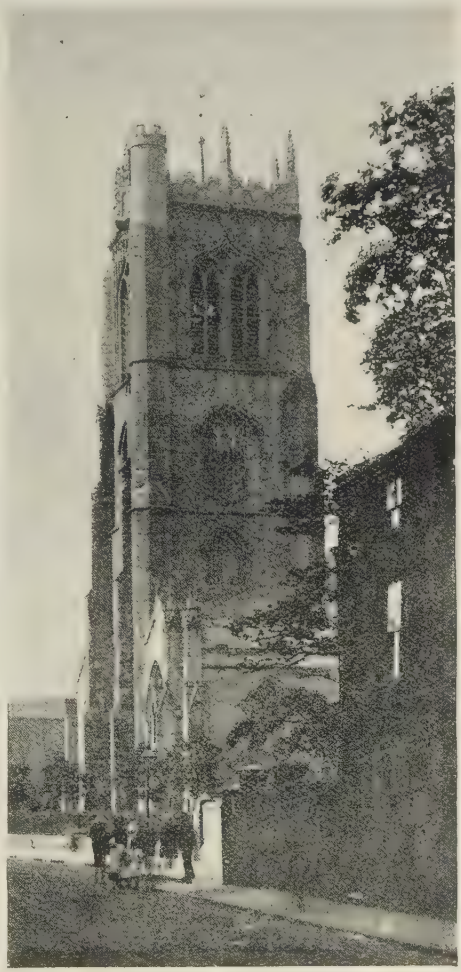
It should here be stated, although it occurred fully fifty years later than the days of John of Gaunt, that in the middle of the fifteenth century St. Margaret's Church was enlarged and decorated, receiving the additions of its beautiful south porch and fine tower. The latter was erected from the proceeds of a tax levied for the purpose upon each hearth or fire-place in the parish, and called the "Smoke Farthing."

* The subject of placing this valuable glass on permanent view is now receiving the careful consideration of the Society.

ST. NICHOLAS' CHURCH (LOOKING WEST).

Leicester bell-founders.

The Churches of Leicester appear to have been early enriched by bells. One is known to have existed in St. Peter's in the year 1306; and Dr. Carte mentions the fact that one of the bells of St. Nicholas' Church was removed in 1321. Towards the end of the fourteenth century a bell-foundry was established in Leicester by one John of Stafford which, through the course of several centuries, reappears from time to time under the name and management of Millers, Bett, and the well-known "casting" families of Newcombe and Watts, contemporaries in the sixteenth and early part of the



ST. MARGARET'S TOWER.

seventeenth centuries, with foundries in Northgate Street and Gallowtree Gate,—and finally, after the lapse of a few years, was again carried on at the beginning of the eighteenth century by Thomas Clay and his successor, Edward Arnold; the latter having a foundry in Hangman's Lane, now Newarke Street. At a branch establishment at St. Neot's, belonging to the last named founder, was employed an apprentice bearing the name of Taylor, now so familiar in connection with bell-casting in this neighbourhood. This Robert Taylor in due time succeeded to the business in that town, and in 1821 removed it to Oxford. In 1840, Mr. John Taylor, one of the firm, established a bell-foundry in Loughborough, where his successors now carry on the art, in which they have justly acquired a national reputation.

Sale of the Abbey bells.

We are told that the bells of Leicester Abbey were sold at its dissolution for the sum of £88 to Robert Newcombe, who soon afterwards exchanged the great bell with the churchwardens of the parish church of Peterborough for their "brokyn" one, receiving the equivalent in money. This interesting relic, however, finally disappeared when the peal of that church was re-cast early in the nineteenth century. In the year 1564 Thomas Newcombe, his son, bought the bells of St. Peter's Church from the town authorities, who thus raised money for repairing the existing School-house; and about the same date his contemporary, Francis Watts, purchased the bell-wheels of the same decaying church.

Sale of St. Peter's bells.

Miracle Plays.

As was customary in the Middle Ages, the churches of the town were frequently the scene of Miracle Plays or Mysteries, though these were occasionally represented upon moveable platforms in the public streets, and also in the churchyards. The Churchwarden's accounts of St. Mary of the Castle and of St. Martin's each show records of these religious performances, continuing in the latter church as late as the middle of the sixteenth century.

Wayside Chapels.

In addition to the regular parish churches there existed, as was usual in towns at this period, several small wayside chapels situated near their entrances, and intended chiefly for the use of pilgrims and wayfarers. These were frequently built upon bridges, as in the case of the Chapel of Our Lady of the Brigge in Leicester, already referred to. Another, standing on the Belgrave Road near the Spital, and called the Chapel of St. John the Baptist, was connected with the Hospital and Chapel of St. John, in Highcross Street; while a third, St. James's Chapel, stood beyond the South Gate, and near the Church of St. Sepulchre, its patron saint being

the especial guardian of pilgrims and wayfarers. The Hermitage, another of these small wayside retreats, had been erected close to a deep well in the neighbourhood of St. James's, and indeed is supposed by some authorities to be identical with the latter. The spring was celebrated for centuries afterwards for the purity of its water, and only ceased to exist in the year 1852, probably drained by the great increase of buildings in the vicinity. On the north of the town the Church of St. Leonard's, which stood in immediate proximity to St. Sunday's Bridge, would probably serve the purpose of one of those devotional halting places for travellers entering from that quarter. This church, of which we know very little, was standing in the year 1220, and existed until the siege of Leicester in 1645.

St. Leonard's Church.

Religious Guilds.

We must not conclude this part of our subject without a brief mention of the Religious Guilds, which formed so important a feature in the social life of towns in the Middle Ages. Their main object was to provide for the saying of masses for the souls both of living and deceased members in the particular church with which the Guild was associated. Most of the Guilds were dedicated to a patron saint whose name they bore, and on whose annual feast-day the members walked in solemn procession through the gaily-adorned and crowded streets of the town; a general holiday and merry-making being observed by the people.

Corpus Christi Guild, founded 1342.

The earliest formed and most important of these religious associations in Leicester was the Guild of Corpus Christi, founded in the year 1343. It maintained four Chantry priests to pray for the souls of its members in the Church of St. Martin or "S. Crosse," as it then was generally called; and their place of meeting, or the Corpus Christi Guildhall, stood

close by, and still forms the eastern end or practically the main-part of, our ancient Town Hall. The gabled building forming an angle with the Guildhall, and now partly occupied by the Town Library, is supposed to have been the Chantry-house built for the use of the Guild priests. The Corpus Christi Guild soon became popular and wealthy, being joined by most of the leading burgesses; and it accumulated many important properties in and about the town, as the records of its rentals testify. The annual Procession on Corpus Christi Day, the Thursday after Trinity Sunday, was a great local event, when the sacred Host was borne aloft through the streets under a splendidly-adorned canopy carried by the Mayor and some of his Brethren, who passed between rows of kneeling, holiday-clad spectators, and accompanied by a long train of priests and members, besides young men and children, bearing banners and lighted tapers, and throwing clouds of incense right and left as they solemnly perambulated the town. A feast con-

TOWN LIBRARY (CHANTRY HOUSE). 1906.

cluded the day's ceremony, which was always as splendid and joyous as it could be made.

St. George's Guild.

Early in the fifteenth century, another Guild was formed in connection with St. Martin's. This was the Guild of St. George, whose chapel occupied the west end of the broad south aisle of the church. St. George's Hall, the meeting place of its members, stood in the present Town Hall Lane, close to the passage leading by the east end of St. Martin's Church. In the chapel of St. George, boldly prominent upon a raised platform near the altar, stood a life-sized and armour-clad figure of the Saint on horseback. On the feast-day of the Guild, which was not invariably St. George's Day, but a date annually fixed by its officials, the Guild-master having caused proclamation to be made from the High Cross and elsewhere, and invitations to attend the ceremony to be sent to the county magnates, the figure of St. George was taken out of the church, and borne upon a wheeled stage through the principal streets, accompanied, as the records indicate, by the Dragon and other characters of the Legend, and followed by an imposing procession of municipal and other personages. This was called the "Riding of the George," and was looked upon as the greatest holiday of the year; the town being filled with country people to view the ceremony, and the day devoted to feasting and rejoicing.

Riding of the George.

Other Guilds.

In connection with St. Margaret's was the Guild of St. Mary, St. Margaret and St. Katherine; and belonging to All Saints was the Guild of the Assumption, both founded during the fourteenth century; while about the same time was established the smaller Guild of St. John the Baptist, which provided a priest to say Mass at the Guild Chapel of the Hospital of St. John in High Cross Street, and also at

St. John's Chapel at the "Town's End,"—the wayside oratory on the Belgrave Road lately mentioned.

The Trinity Guild in St. Mary's Church was a more important body, though it was not formed until the end of the fifteenth century. Its chapel occupied the east end of the south aisle or Parish Church; and four collections were made during the year to defray its expenses, which consisted mainly of the priests' stipends, and the cost of the annual treat on Trinity Sunday. "A dinner and supper were given to the members on that festival," (says Mr. Thompson,) "and a breakfast the next morning, when the retiring officers presented their accounts, and new ones were chosen."

The Trinity Guild in St. Mary's.

The connection between St. Mary's Church and Trinity Hospital has always been a close one. During the Elizabethan period, the Wardenship of the latter was held by the Earl of Huntingdon who, in 1609, sold it to the Corporation of Leicester; the Mayor to be the Master during his year of office, with four "most ancient" Aldermen as assistants. At the present day the Mayor, in connection with the Chaplain, who is appointed by the Duchy of Lancaster, has the privilege of nominating the recipients of the charity, in the proportion of four to one, and subject to the approval of the Chancellor of the Duchy. Thus it came about that, for nearly three centuries, on the afternoon of every Trinity Sunday, the Mayor and Corporation clad, until comparatively late years, in their robes of office, have attended Divine service at St. Mary's, together with the black-gowned inmates of the Hospital, when the church is profusely decked with flowers, and a collection made and afterwards divided among the poor old almspeople. Year by year, as the day comes round for the observance of this ancient custom, the pathetic procession

Trinity Hospital and annual sermon in St. Mary's.

of infirm and aged hospitallers still shuffles up the nave in the rear of the more comely and prosperous band of civic functionaries, who are met at the north door by the clergy and choristers, and duly preceded to their seats by the wand-bearing churchwardens, while the swelling organ peals, and the solemn hymn ascends through the heavy, flower-laden atmosphere of the church. But who nowadays, among that mixed and crowded congregation, reflects for a moment upon the life of the Hospital in its olden time, under the fostering care of the great Earls of Leicester who founded it; or how many seek to conjure up the faded memories of the ancient church itself, during the bygone centuries when it was the private chapel of those Earls, and the scene of many a sacred or imposing ceremony connected with the life of the neighbouring Castle, with which it has ever been linked?

Whit-Monday Procession to St. Margaret's

In mediæval Leicester, however, the Whit-Monday procession to St. Margaret's was perhaps the most interesting religious festival of the year. It was marshalled in St. Mary's Church, which always took the lead in this event; and its principal feature was the richly-adorned image of the Virgin borne aloft under a gay canopy, preceded by priests and minstrels, and followed by twelve persons representing the Apostles, each with his assumed name inscribed on parchment in front of his cap. The young girls of the parish, probably clad in white and carrying flowers, took a prominent part in this procession; and its effect was heightened by numbers of embroidered flags and banners, including one described as "the great streamer of silk," which needed fourteen men to carry it. Issuing from the portals of the dim church, amid the eager crowd of friends and onlookers and the clashing of bells from the steeple above, the proces-

ST. MARY'S CHURCH.

sion, animated by the bright sun and fresh breeze of an early summer morning, yearly wound its way from the Castle precincts into the principal, or High, Street. Here fresh crowds awaited it, and here, too, it was presently joined by a tributary procession from St. Martin's, also bearing the image of the Virgin, accompanied by the twelve Apostles. Headed by the chanting priests and incense-bearing acolytes,—passing in and out among the shadows of the trees that bordered the roadway at intervals, and sometimes stretched their leafy boughs across it,—the long and solemn train moved northward between the rows of gabled houses whose windows were filled by interested sightseers, while hundreds of spectators lined the streets and reverently uncovered as the sacred image was borne along. From the churches of St. Nicholas and St. Peter, of St. Michael and All Saints, fresh accessions swelled its ranks, so that when it had passed through the North Gate into the broad Sancta Via or Sanvey Gate leading to the Mother Church of St. Margaret, it had increased to large proportions, and included members from the households of a large number of the townspeople. Arrived at the ancient church, whose priests stood awaiting it under the open western doorway, the procession, or a part of it, advanced to the High Altar, where the singular annual offering was made of two pairs of gloves,—one to the glory of God, the other to St. Thomas of India. The accompanying ceremonial over, the processions returned to their several churches, and the respective members were regaled at the expense of their parish.

Before concluding this slight sketch of Leicester in the Middle Ages, we must return for a moment to the Castle, and consider its relation to the citizens of the town. The

stately pile, with the massive Norman Keep on the Mount in its rear, rose high above the dwellings around, and looked down upon the river at its foot, and far away over the wooded country beyond. Its court-yard or Bailey was enclosed by high walls, and was defended on the river side by a strong tower, near to which stood the Castle Mill. In mediæval times the principal entrance to the Castle stood on the north-east, probably somewhat outside the present covered gateway into the courtyard which adjoins the north door of St. Mary's Church. This gateway is all that remains of a Porter's Lodge dating from early Tudor times, taking the place of the older and more imposing entrance, and acting as a protection to

The Castle

CASTLE HOUSE AND TUDOR GATEWAY (*by St. Mary's Church*).

the then disused Castle. On the south side lay the now ruined Turret Gateway, which led into the outer Bailey or New Work of the later Earls; and which, like the other entrances, was strongly guarded by men at arms, both day and night. In the centre of the court-yard facing the great Hall was a place of execution, under which from time to time human remains, sometimes showing decapitation, have been found; and during excavations for a deep sewer underneath the spot, as many as twenty skulls once came to light, bringing before us in a vivid manner certain scenes inseparable from the stern and merciless régime of a baronial Castle in the Middle Ages.

The household of the Earl held themselves somewhat aloof from the townspeople. "In point of authority and influence," says Mr. Thompson, "the Earl's steward, butler, knights, and esquires who lived in and about the Castle stood above the burgesses, with the exception of the Mayor and his twenty-four brethren, who conjointly ruled the town." If, however, the bulk of the citizens viewed the hospitalities of the Castle somewhat from a distance, these were extended with unbounded liberality to all strangers and comers of rank; and every vassal and retainer had also a right to the table of his feudal lord; the Earl with his family and friends presiding at the upper board, while the household and guests of inferior degree crowded the lower end.

Its decay.

After the death of John of Gaunt, and the absorption of the titles of Duke of Lancaster and Earl of Leicester in the person of King Henry IV., the castle never again occupied the centre of importance in the town, for it was no longer the residence of a powerful Prince, whose outward relations brought the people of mediæval Leicester into familiar touch

with the imperial affairs of the realm, and gave them occupation and interest beyond the narrow limits of provincial life. Though the Castle of Leicester continued to belong to the Crown, and was occasionally the scene of a meeting of Parliament, or the few day's abode of a King, it was now practically deserted; and in less than a century after the brilliant days of Duke Henry and John of Gaunt, it had become a silent, uninhabited spot.

In the year 1512, the historiographer Leland describes the building, then little else than a ruin, as "a thing of small estimation;" and although, in the time of Queen Elizabeth, there existed both a Constable of the Castle and a Keeper of the Walls, their duties must have been almost nominal.

In 1633, King Charles I. addressed a commission to Mr. William Herricke, the then Constable, ordering certain ruinous and useless parts of the Castle of Leicester at that time standing, to be taken down, and the materials used for the repair of the Castle House, which has already been described as that part adjoining the gateway by the north door of St. Mary's Church. The south-east end of the great Hall, and the south or Turret Gateway leading into the Newarke, were also to be repaired. The surplus material was to be sold to the best advantage.

"In the civil wars,"—again to quote Mr. Thompson,—"the Castle was alternately made use of by both parties, and considerable damage was done to many of the buildings in the neighbourhood. General Fairfax found herein a large quantity of ammunition and the King's best artillery, on his taking possession of the building in June 1645."

Amidst the general dilapidation of centuries, however, the interior outline of the great Hall has been preserved in its

original proportions, and has continued in use for Assize purposes and other public gatherings, until the present day. The County of Leicester did well in purchasing from the Crown a few years ago this interesting and valuable relic of Ancient Leicester; and we would fain cherish the hope that in spite of the opposing claims of modern progress, we may one day see the fine old Hall restored to a semblance, at least, of its byegone importance.

FONT IN ALL SAINTS' CHURCH. (See page 120.)

Table of the Norman and Plantagenet (or Lancastrian) Earls of Leicester.

NORMAN EARLS—	A.D.
Robert de Beaumont	1107
Robert (Bossu)	1118
Robert (Blanchmains)	1169
Robert (Fitz Parnel)	1190
Simon (In right of his Countess Amicia) ...	1204
Simon de Montfort (Slain at Evesham, A.D. 1265)	1218
PLANTAGENET (or LANCASTRIAN) EARLS—	
Edmund (Earl of Lancaster, Crouchback) ...	1265
Thomas (Earl of Lancaster, beheaded A.D. 1322)	1299
Henry (Earl of Lancaster)	1322
Henry (Duke of Lancaster)	1345
William of Bavaria (Earl of Leicester, in right of the Lady Maud)	1361
John of Gaunt (Duke of Lancaster, in right of the Lady Blanche)	1377
Henry of Bolingbroke (King of England) ...	1399

PART IV.

Leicester in the Sixteenth Century.

PART IV.

Leicester in the Sixteenth Century.

CHAPTER IX.

INTRODUCTORY.

DURING the century and a half which elapsed between the decline of the Castle of Leicester after the death of John of Gaunt, and the important changes brought about in our town by the English Reformation, and the rise of new local institutions in the reign of Queen Elizabeth, several isolated events of interest should be mentioned, as forming small but important links in the chain of its history.

Parliament meets in Leicester A.D. 1414.

In the year 1414 a meeting of Parliament was held in Leicester; one of the two Houses assembling in the large Hall of the Grey Friars' Monastery, near St. Martin's Church, and the other in a neighbouring building, called "La Fermerie," of which nothing beyond the name now appears to be definitely known. It is probable, however, that an ancient timbered house standing until comparatively recent years in

Redcross Street, noticeable from the heraldic devices displayed upon its front, some of which belong to the House of Lancaster,—and even then still called by local tradition the "Parliament House," was identical with it. Perhaps equally possible is it that the Lower House on this or a subsequent occasion had occupied a rude building lying outside the

THE "PARLIAMENT HOUSE."

Town Wall at the end of the present Millstone Lane, and which survived under the name of the "Old Barn" until the latter part of the eighteenth century. This primitive structure had then for many years been used as a place of worship by the Methodist body, who took it down in 1787,

and erected a chapel on its site. It had originally been made for a tithe barn, and was capable of accommodating a large number of people. Its interior had a high-pitched open roof, supported by wooden props, and it was thatched on the outside.

At this Session of Parliament, the extermination of Lollardism, which had by this time so greatly increased as to be considered dangerous to the State, was determined upon, with the penalty of confiscation of property and even death at the stake. "This," says Mr. Thompson, "must always be known as the 'Fire and Faggot' Parliament; and must ever be identified with the town of Leicester where, the tares of heresy having been grown, the torch for their destruction was kindled."

The "Parliament of Bats," A.D. 1426.

In 1426, a Parliament again met in Leicester,—this time in the great Hall of the Castle,—at the sittings of which, in consequence of the angry feud then existing between the Duke of Gloucester, youngest brother of King Henry V., and the powerful and fiery-tempered Beaufort, Bishop of Winchester, the wearing of weapons by the members was strictly forbidden, as likely to lead to bloodshed. To carry clubs or "bats," however, and to load their hanging, pouch-like sleeves with stones and lead, appeared to the partisan Barons to be an honest and suitable evasion of the letter of this prohibition; and serious mischief was averted only by the strenuous efforts of the neutral members, who succeeded in arranging the quarrel before a general melée took place. This Parliament is known in history as the "Parliament of Bats;" and it is recorded that, as the local festival of St. George occurred near the close of an interval during the Session, the day of reassembling was postponed in order that the members might join in the ceremonies, and witness the

"Riding of the George" through the streets of Leicester.

The Court, under the Regent Duke of Bedford, appears for a time to have occupied the Castle residence while this Parliament was sitting; and its slumbering precincts awoke once more to the sounds of martial preparation and festivity on a bright and joyous morning in the early summer of that year when the little five-year-old King, Henry VI., was formally received into the ranks of knighthood in the adjoining Church of St. Mary, with solemn and imposing ceremonial. About forty other candidates for the honour were admitted at the same time, "after which," says Mr. Kelly, "their horses being brought into the church, they mounted and rode out among the populace assembled in the Castle-yard, who hailed them with loud acclamations; and among whom, as was usual, the newly-made knights showered money, amidst the cries of 'largesse, largesse.'" The scene must have been a brilliant one. The grey old walls of the church looked down upon a crowded assemblage of nobles, Commons, and Court officials in splendid and festive attire, while banners, music, and gorgeous ritual enhanced the spectacle. The accompanying incidents of the address to the knights by the famous Henry Beaufort, Bishop of Winchester, afterwards Cardinal; the investiture of the baby King with the royal sword, which he received kneeling at the altar; the lisping of the knightly vows, administered by his uncle the Duke of Bedford; and finally, the buckling on of the royal spurs and armour by the hands of the noblest and fairest of the Court ladies present, combine to form a picture which, gay and hopeful enough at the time becomes, when viewed by the contrasting sequel of events, painfully suggestive of the unhappy future which awaited the innocent and smiling hero of the day.

King Henry VI. created a Knight in St. Mary's Church, A.D. 1426.

In 1450 the English Parliament once more assembled in Leicester, and for the last time, being adjourned from Westminster in consequence of the temporary unhealthiness of that locality.

Parliament meets in Leicester for the last time, A.D. 1450.

The kingdom was now divided and distracted by the Wars of the Roses ; and shortly after the battle of Towton in 1461, (the most sanguinary of all the encounters which occurred during this unhappy period,) the House of Lancaster ceased to occupy the throne, King Henry VI. being taken prisoner by the Yorkists, and confined in the Tower of London, where he was afterwards murdered. In this battle the men-at-arms from Leicester had fought upon the Yorkist side under the banner of Sir William Hastings of Kirby Muxloe, who was a devoted friend and adherent of the Duke of York, afterwards King Edward IV. The Hastings family subsequently rose to great importance, and were prominently connected with the town and county of Leicester for long afterwards.

The Yorkist king, Edward IV., who had married Elizabeth Woodville, widow of Sir John Grey of Groby Hall, several times visited Leicester, and among other favours granted to the citizens a Charter for the appointment of Magistrates and a Recorder for the Borough. In consequence of the violent partisanship engendered by the existence of rival claimants to the throne, society in Leicester, as well as in other parts of the country at this period, was in a most disturbed and inflammable condition ; and from the prevalent lawlessness it was deemed necessary to divide the town into twelve Wards, with an Alderman appointed over each, to assist in the maintenance of order. This was in 1483, but party animosity raged for long afterwards.

King Edward IV. grants a Charter for the appointment of Magistrates and a Recorder.

The town first divided into Wards, A.D. 1483.

In the month of October of that year the new King,

King Richard III. at Leicester Castle.

Richard III., spent nearly a week in the Castle of Leicester, occupied in making arrangements for quelling the insurrection of the rebel Duke of Buckingham.

Two years later, when disaffection was rapidly spreading throughout the kingdom, and rumours were abroad of a threatened invasion by Henry Earl of Richmond, the King, early in June, repaired from London to Nottingham in order to occupy that town as his headquarters until more settled times. About the middle of August news reached him of the landing of the Earl at Milford Haven. Richard at once assembled his troops in the Nottingham Market Place, arranged them in marching order, and having despatched messengers to Leicester with urgent summons for reinforcements, set out for this town at the head of his men on his march towards Shrewsbury, to which place the Earl of Richmond had already advanced.

Entry of Richard III. into Leicester on his march to Bosworth Aug., 1483.

It was with various shades of feeling and sympathy that the people of Leicester, in the evening of that same summer day, thronged the approaches to the North Gate to look once more upon the face of King Richard as, brilliantly accoutred and with diadem-encircled helmet, but stern and wrathful of mien he entered the town, followed by the long line of his well-appointed troops, and rode in imposing state up its principal street towards the High Cross. How he alighted and took up his quarters at the Blue (then probably called the *White*) Boar Inn, the Castle in its fast declining condition apparently unsuitable for the housing of so illustrious a guest; —how, after reposing for a night or two upon the historical bedstead whose hidden treasure of coin, discovered long afterwards, prompted to greed and foul murder,* he led his army

* Mrs. Clarke, the landlady in 1605, was murdered through the connivance of her female servants, in order to obtain possession of the gold.

forth by the West Gate and over the Bow Bridge, all eager to meet and crush his foe; - and how the muttered prophecy thence pursued him that presently his head should strike against the corner stone which now chanced to touch his steel-clad heel, has often been related. Part of his troops, (it seems uncertain whether or not those in the immediate command of Richard,) slept that night at the village of Elmsthorpe where some of the officers occupied the parish church; while the main portion of the army advanced through Kirby Muxloe in a south-westerly direction towards Bosworth. The fatal conflict took place on the morning of the 22nd of August, and Leicester that evening saw not only the arrival of the victorious Earl of Richmond, hastily crowned King Henry VII.

THE BLUE BOAR INN.

on the field of battle, and who rested in the town for the night, but also the miserable return of Richard's dishonoured corpse which, stripped, and hanging loosely across the back of a horse, is said to have fulfilled the dark saying that only a day or two before had cast its baleful shadow upon the expedition as it rode forth from the western suburbs.

The Collegiate Church of the Newarke, and the Guildhall in Blue Boar Lane are each accredited with having received the mutilated remains of the King; and after lying for two days exposed to the public gaze and insult, the rite of decent burial was mercifully accorded them in the Grey Friars Monastery. Here an elaborate monumental slab was afterwards erected to Richard's memory by his victorious rival, but at the dissolution of the Religious Houses under King Henry VIII., this was torn down and destroyed by the mob, who also unearthed the bones of the hated tyrant and, bearing them with brutal derision to the Bow Bridge, flung them into the river with every mark of insult. They were afterwards recovered, and buried at the end of the bridge furthest from the town. The empty stone coffin in which the remains had been enclosed long afterwards found a humble use as a drinking-trough for horses in the yard of the White Horse Inn, which stood in Gallowtree Gate upon the site of the present Stamford and Spalding Bank; but for many years all trace of the relic has disappeared.

CHAPTER X.

BY the beginning of the sixteenth century we have arrived at a time when the feudal relationship of classes in English towns had long given place to a more independent and responsible life among their citizens; and in considering the principal events and general condition of Leicester at this period we find the Middle Class beginning to assume some resemblance to its modern position as the accountable agent for the conduct of the town affairs, both internal and external. In a word, the town now virtually stood by itself, instead of, as in feudal times, existing only as an adjunct in the life of its Earls.

The first name that occurs in the early part of the sixteenth century in connection with any event of lasting local importance is that of William Wigston, whose noble foundation has solaced and benefitted so many generations of his aged fellow-townspeople; and at the present time, under a new and broader administration of its increasingly valuable properties, is also spreading among the future citizens of Leicester the blessings of an advanced modern education.

The Wigston family, probably at one time natives of the village of that name, had for some generations lived in Leicester, actively engaged in the wool trade. Enterprising and industrious, they had amassed great wealth, and were

esteemed and respected among the community on account of their useful services as citizens. William Wigston was the son of John Wigston of the Newarke,* and in his lifetime was called William the younger, having a cousin of the same name about fourteen years his senior, the son of his uncle

WIGSTON'S HOTPITAL (CHAPEL). 1875.

Roger. Probably both cousins were so named after their grandfather William Wigston, who was Mayor in 1448. The Founder of the Hospital, like others of his family, was a wool-merchant, and belonged to the Staple of Calais, a privi-

William Wigston and his Hospital.

* This is proved by the evidence of the Founder's Will, consulted some years since, at Somerset House.

lege accorded to but a few. In 1499, when only twenty-seven years of age, he was chosen Mayor; and in 1503 he was sent to Parliament as the representative of the borough. In 1509 he was again Mayor. He was twice married, but without children, and as he approached old age he resolved to devote a large portion of his riches to the welfare of the poorer townsfolk of Leicester by building and endowing a hospital for the reception of twelve old men and the same number of old women, "considering and calling to mind that the flower of my youth is past in earthly employment and cares; and desiring to offer an evening sacrifice to the Most High" as runs the quaint and pious language of the deed of foundation. In more or less direct association with his two brothers, Roger and Thomas, the latter being a priest, he obtained letters patent from Henry VIII. for carrying out his charitable design; and besides providing for the maintenance of the hospital from the rental of his many properties

WIGSTON'S HOSPITAL (UPPER FLOOR). 1869.

in and around Leicester, he drew up with his own hand a code of regulations for its government.

St. Ursula's Hospital, as it was at first called, was erected close by the western side of St. Martin's Churchyard, being completed in 1520; and the twenty-four old people who first found a resting place within its quiet walls have been followed by the like number in direct succession ever since. The old hospital remained in use until the year 1869, when the inmates were removed to the present handsome structure on the outskirts of the town, near the Hinckley Road. The building itself was taken down in 1875, and the site of its Chapel is now covered with slabs of stone, railed off by an ornamental palisading from the playground of the Wyggeston Boys' School. Upon the central slab is an inscription recording that the remains of some of its Chaplains and inmates still lie underneath, though their monumental stones have been transferred to the Chapel of the new Hospital. A handsome canopied stone niche, one of a pair enclosing sculptured figures which had enriched the exterior of the large window of the dismantled Hospital Chapel was removed into St. Nicholas' Church, at that time undergoing partial restoration, and now occupies a conspicuous position on the west wall of its north aisle. Through the public spirit of our late respected townsman and archæologist Mr. Thomas Nevinson, the carved oak pulpit and the best portion of the woodwork were transferred to the chancel of the Chapel in the Trinity Hospital, which he was then interesting himself in restoring, where they now replace the plain and meagre fittings previously in use.

A year or two before the time at which William Wigston began to contemplate his larger design he had, in conjunction

with his two brothers, founded a Chantry in the Collegiate Church of the Newarke, in order that masses might be said for his soul; and had erected and endowed a substantial Wigston's Chantry

WIGSTON'S CHANTRY HOUSE. 1891.

dwelling close by, for the home and maintenance of the two priests who were, in succession for ever, to officiate at the altar on his behalf. This Chantry-House, a handsome three-storied building much patched and renovated, but preserving many of its original features, is still standing at the right-hand corner of the narrow thoroughfare leading from the Newarke to the Turret Gateway of the Castle; and above its doorway, half hidden by the luxuriant ivy which clothes the front of the house, the coat of arms of William Wigston may yet be seen. Little did the good man read the signs of the times, or suspect that the day was not far distant when Chantry, priests, altars, and the whole ornate ritual of the Romish Church were to be swept away in the mighty change then about to revolutionize the old forms of religious worship. Wigston's own burial took place in the Collegiate Church, whence all trace of his tomb, as well as of many other illustrious personages interred within its walls, seems to have unaccountably vanished at the demolition of this beautiful edifice, towards the end of the seventeenth century. One alone of the tombs survived the destruction which appears to have been their general fate. This is the one described in an earlier chapter, now standing in the chancel of the Chapel in Trinity Hospital.

Connected with this period of our local history, and commonly considered as affording the sole claim for interest in the Abbey of Leicester, is the reception and death of Cardinal Wolsey within its walls, on his way southwards to London from Cawood near York, to answer to the King upon the charge of high treason, for which he had just been apprehended.

It was in the year 1529, amid the misty gloom of an early

Reception and death of Cardinal Wolsey, at Leicester Abbey, A.D. 1530.

November evening, that the disgraced and suffering Cardinal, with his little escort, arrived from the direction of Nottingham at the grand north entrance of Leicester Abbey.* Here was gathered, beneath the fitful flare of torches, the little expectant group of canons with their Abbot, Ralph Pexall, waiting to receive the illustrious guest and to conduct him within their hospitable walls. The dying Cardinal, with his melancholy greeting recorded by Cavendish, and thus immortalized by Shakspeare—

> "O Father Abbot,
> An old man, broken with the storms of state
> Is come to lay his weary bones among ye;
> Give him a little earth for charity!"

rode beneath the gateway into the Abbey precincts, and on account of his great feebleness his mule was led inside the building to the foot of the staircase ascending to his chamber; and he was with difficulty helped up to the bed from which he never rose. Immediately after his death at eight o'clock in the morning of the third day later, his remains were reverently disposed for the ceremonial visit of the Mayor and his Brethren from Leicester, which was duly paid. That night the body was carried, in solemn procession, down into the Lady Chapel, where the coffin was lighted by tapers and

* Of this entrance from the Abbey Lane, probably near to, or identical with, the opening in the wall now leading to the modern nursery-gardens and residence, nothing whatever remains. The wide, built-up gateway, which is still to be seen in the north-eastern wall extending along the Abbey Park Road, flanked by two low towers, and commonly called "Wolsey's Gateway," belongs to an altogether later period. When the Abbey was standing, however, in the seventeenth century, there probably was a secondary entrance at this spot, as the farm buildings lay on that side; and of this entrance the two low towers may possibly have formed a part. The main entrance was on the high road to Leicester from the north, and this would be the one at which Wolsey was received.

watched through the small hours by torch-bearing attendants, while the canons at intervals sang the Dirige and portions of the service for the dead. Between five and six o'clock, before the dawn of the dark November morning, mass was celebrated by the Abbot, and the "weary bones" of the once mighty ecclesiastic were laid to rest in the centre of the Chapel with every available ceremonial; the Mayor and his Brethren in their robes being again in attendance, to add dignity to the last solemn rites.

Dissolution of the Abbey, A.D. 1537.

Seven years afterwards, the final Act for the Suppression of Monasteries having been passed, the King's Commissioners visited Leicester Abbey and called upon the then Abbot, John Bourchier, to surrender his charge to the Crown. This at first he refused to do, but he soon found himself compelled to yield, and the little convent, consisting at that time of not more then ten canons, whose names have been preserved, was at once dissolved and dispersed, its members afterwards receiving compensation from the Crown in the form of life pensions. The noble Abbey was quickly dismantled and defaced. Its furniture and goods were sold, and the proceeds paid into the Augmentation Office; its plate and jewels were declared forfeit to the King; and many of its landed possessions were disposed of among courtiers and others by sale, gift, and exchange. Finally, Church, cloisters, refectory, dormitories, and all the minor buildings were stripped of their lead and other saleable material, and thus despoiled were left to fall into ruin and decay.

Thus the important Abbey of Leicester, which had opened its hospitable gates alike to kings and beggars, to lay and ecclesiastical nobles, and to wayfarers of every degree; which had fed the poor, taught the young, and ministered to the

sick, was summarily reduced to nought; and at the present time, although a few fragments of its mediæval masonry are here and there to be seen, the wide-reaching boundary walls, portions of which are still intact, afford the only reliable evidence of its former size and extent. Inside them experts have dug and searched among the numerous wall-foundations, not only for traces of the tomb of Cardinal Wolsey, but for tokens to assist them in forming a definite idea of the plan and outline of the ancient Abbey of St. Mary de Pratis,—but all in vain, notwithstanding the fact that, some years ago, a document was discovered in the Public Record Office describing the surroundings and stating the dimensions of some of the buildings in "the late Monastery of Leicester." This document probably dates from towards the end of Henry's reign.

Soon after the Dissolution, part of the Abbey grounds and buildings were bestowed by the King upon William Cavendish, erroneously supposed to have been the faithful attendant and biographer of Cardinal Wolsey. It is now established, however, that this honourable office was discharged by his elder brother George Cavendish, who after Wolsey's death passed into comparative retirement. William, on the contrary, by some lucky accident of circumstance or disposition had been appointed one of the Commissioners for visiting and taking the surrenders of the Religious Houses, and Auditor of the Court of Augmentation. Many of the Abbey lands both of Leicester and other counties were bestowed upon him, and thus he continued to increase in wealth and to rise in office. He was the founder of the noble houses of Devonshire and Newcastle, and died in 1557. His widow, Lady Elizabeth Cavendish, who by her ability nursed and

augmented the property, afterwards married for her fourth husband the Earl of Shrewsbury, and became the celebrated "Bess of Hardwicke." The Abbey grounds of Leicester passed through various hands during the next thirty years, but were finally re-purchased or re-allotted to another member of the Cavendish family, who erected within the walls a new and handsome dwelling thenceforward known as the "Cavendish Mansion."

Erection of the "Cavendish" or "Abbey" Mansion.

After the suppression of the Abbey, that of the other corporate Religious Houses in Leicester quickly followed. The College of the beautiful Church of "Our Ladye" in the Newarke was dissolved in 1545, and its lands and properties confiscated to the Crown. The fraternities of the Grey Friars, as well as those of the Augustine and Black Friars, were forced to surrender their entire properties; and it was during the general excitement and disorder which prevailed in the town while these destructive measures were being carried out, that the coffin of King Richard III. in the Grey Friars' Church was desecrated by the mob, and his remains maltreated and disposed of as before related.

Suppression of the other Religious Houses in 1545.

Two years afterwards, in consequence of the royal Injunctions issued soon after the accession of the young King Edward VI., who was zealously urged along the path of reform by Archbishop Cranmer, the parish churches were stripped of all their adornments and imagery, and the plainer forms of the Protestant worship officially decreed for use, in place of the elaborate ritual of the Church of Rome. In the year 1547 a sale was held of the priest's vestments, hangings for Rood-Loft and Altars, plate, and other furniture belonging to St. Martin's Church, which is duly recorded in the Churchwardens' accounts. The whole of the alabaster images, brass-

Stripping of the parish Churches in 1547.

work, and richly carved wood and stone decorations were removed or broken to pieces; the organ-case and pipes were disposed of for a small sum as waste material, and in substitution for the fine old music, a psalter for the use of the clerk in leading the congregational singing was introduced. Similar changes took place in all the parish churches of the town. Their altars gave place to Communion tables; an English Bible was ordered to be kept in every church, with the Commentary on the Gospels by Erasmus; and a Book of Common Prayer, mainly identical with that still in use, superseded the old Breviaries and Missals.

The Religious Guilds dissolved 1548.

The Religious Guilds were the last to suffer in the general downfall of Romish institutions in Leicester. In 1548, the King's Commissioners were sent to investigate their affairs and accounts, and to arrange for the disposal or sale of their possessions. St. Margaret's Guild, Trinity Guild, St. George's, St. John's, and the great Guild of Corpus Christi were all now dissolved, and their lands and goods forfeited to the Crown. For the most part these were ultimately sold to wealthy townspeople or country gentlemen. The estates belonging to the Guild of Corpus Christi appear to have been sold by King Edward VI. to Mr. Robert Catelin, then occupying a high position in our county and afterwards, in the early years of Elizabeth's reign, elevated to the rank of Lord Chief Justice of the Queen's Bench.

The Romish ritual restored 1553.

In the year 1553 however, the Accession of Queen Mary suddenly brought about the restoration of the Romish ritual throughout the country; and now doubtless all that was available of the old ecclesiastical imagery and decorations quickly found its way back to the parish churches, while much must have been newly placed there. It may fairly be

inferred however, that in the gloomy days which followed, men's minds were occupied far more by controversy and by the terrors of religious persecution than with the demand for art in embellishing religious worship; and the interior of our churches probably never regained a tithe of their former beauty and completeness.

It was during these harsh and bitter days in the middle of the sixteenth century that the sturdy reformer Hugh Latimer of Thurcaston near Leicester suffered at the stake for his zealous championship of the Protestant doctrines. He had refused to re-occupy the comfortable Bishopric of Worcester, of which Henry VIII. had deprived him, preferring to carry on the work of the Reformation by preaching its doctrines up and down the country; and his voice was heard in St. Martin's Church, in 1552, during one of these missionary perambulations. Imprisoned at Oxford by command of Queen Mary, he was released only to be led to the stake; and his grim humour at the terrible moment of sacrifice doubtless shot a ray of courage into many a quaking heart soon to follow on the martyr's path. "Play the Man, Master Ridley," he cried to the companion of his death, "we shall this day light such a candle, by God's grace, in England, as I trust shall never be put out."

Hugh Latimer burnt at the stake, 1557.

It was now, too, that another Leicestershire martyr of a totally different mould was to expiate the unscrupulous ambition of relatives whose own downfall and execution closely accompanied her cruel sacrifice and death in February 1554. Lady Jane Grey, the eldest of three sisters, was the daughter of Thomas Grey, Marquis of Dorset and afterwards Duke of Suffolk. He dwelt in the mansion at Bradgate (or Broadgate) built by his grandfather Thomas

Grey of Groby, the present ruins of which in the beautiful and familiar Bradgate Park, will ever be dear to the hearts of old dwellers in Leicester. From its proximity to the town he, or other members of his family, were frequent visitors there. On such occasions they rested at the private houses of the resident gentry, or at one of the three principal Inns of that period, the Angel, White Hart, or Bull's Head. The mother of Lady Jane Grey, when Marchioness of Dorset, was once hospitably entertained by "Mrs. Mayoress and her Sisters," as the wives of the Aldermen or "Mayor's Brethren" were called. There is also a record of the presentation of wine and confectionery to the gentle Lady Jane herself, when passing through Leicester at the age of twelve, probably on a journey to the Court of Queen Katharine Parr, where she was a frequent visitor, and companion of the young prince Edward.

Sir Thomas White.

Associated in a happier manner with this period of our town's history, and gratefully acknowledged by successive generations of its citizens, is the name of Sir Thomas White, the large-hearted London merchant to whose generous and kindly aid the rise and advancement of numberless struggling men of business in the Midland towns is to be traced. He was a member of the Company of Merchant Taylors, an Alderman of the City Council, and in the year 1546, Lord Mayor of London. In that year he presented to the Mayor and Corporation of Coventry the then munificent sum of £1400, to be laid out in lands, the proceeds of which after his death were to be used in loans for the benefit of the young freemen of Coventry, Northampton, Leicester, Nottingham, and Warwick. The Mayor and Council of our own town, in gratitude, ordered his portrait to be painted in oils,

and hung in the Guildhall. It is now conspicuous in the Council Chamber of the present Town Hall.

THE RUINED CAVENDISH OR ABBEY MANSION.
(*Abbey Ruins, 1906.*) (*See page 158*)

CHAPTER XI.

LATE in the autumn of the year 1558 the bells of the parish churches of Leicester rang out for the coronation of Queen Elizabeth, amid universal rejoicing and hopeful anticipation of brighter times; and soon afterwards the royal decree for the national adoption of the reformed religion again swept bare their ornate interiors. The plain and simple services of the Protestant worship were now permanently established, though accompanied, according to the uncompromising and dogmatic spirit of the period, by a harassing system of compulsion in details. Weekday services were ordered to be held on Wednesdays and Fridays; and it was decreed at a Common Hall, or sitting of the Municipal body, that at least one person from every house in the town must attend each of these services, under a penalty of four pence; an order which it was the unpleasant duty of the Churchwardens to see carried out, by minute and rigorous supervision. More in accordance with the spirit of modern times was the further decree that the shops were to be closed during the greater part of the Sabbath, and no drinking allowed in the taverns until Evening Prayer was over; while a careful provision for the religious teaching of the people enacted that every child of eight years old should be taught the Lord's Prayer and the Creed of the Church.

Joyful accession of Queen Elizabeth.

Protestant Reforms vigorously carried out.

How vast a change had taken place within a few short years in the social and religious life of the town! No more gorgeous Guild processions now perambulated the streets, with banners and music, and images of patron Saints. No more Miracle plays drew large crowds to the churches,—although one is recorded as having taken place in St. Martin's Church as late as the year 1551, which the Mayor and his Brethren attended in preference to a Venison Feast specially prepared for them at the Guildhall close by. No more "Riding of the George" through gaily-adorned thoroughfares, the Mayor and Aldermen taking a dignified part in the procession, and followed by rejoicing crowds in whose anticipation and memory the yearly pageant lived for months. Nor was any longer to be seen in the streets and byeways the once familiar form of grey or black-habited Friar abroad on errands of mercy,—or of the more important parish Priest or Canon of the Abbey, ready with advice or information for the ignorant, or for congenial social intercourse with the gentler folk. The Poor, who had benefitted by the medical knowledge and almsgiving of the religious fraternities, were now left unbefriended, save for the charity of the benevolent, and as a natural consequence the number of half-fed paupers greatly increased. The poverty of the inhabitants, in fact, is the most striking feature of the whole of this period, and the "poor town of Leicester" is the term by which it was frequently mentioned in contemporary local documents. In 1563 a tremendous tempest swept over the town, overthrowing or unroofing four hundred houses in its furious path, and adding materially to the distress of the population. Until long afterwards the effects of this disastrous storm increased the forlorn appearance of the streets, already disfigured by

the decaying houses formerly owned by the Guilds and Colleges, and now the neglected property of the Crown. But in the midst of the prevalent poverty and suffering, no one was allowed to beg in the public thoroughfares, and in various ways the moral as well as the physical needs of the people were carefully looked after. In 1557 we find the "Mayor and the Twenty four" contributing four pence each, weekly, and the "Forty eight" two pence, towards the support of the poor; and for a time attempts were strenuously made to introduce a local manufacture of woollen cloth for the employment and subsistence of the industrious among them.

Before proceeding to mention the rise of certain institutions which were now, however, to give importance to the Elizabethan period of the history of Leicester, it will be necessary to allude at some length to the local magnate who was then occupying by far the highest and most influential position in the society of both town and county. This was Henry Hastings, third Earl of Huntingdon, a descendant of the Sir Walter Hastings of Kirby Muxloe who, during the Wars of the Roses a century previously, had been so warm a supporter of the Yorkist cause. The Hastings family had advanced by degrees to an Earldom, and now possessed several important estates in Leicestershire, including the Castle and lands of Ashby-de-la-Zouch. Henry Lord Huntingdon was one of six brothers,—an ardent Puritan, and the leader of that party in the Provinces, as his brother-in-law the Earl of Leicester was, at Court.

The Earl of Huntingdon

In the year 1569 he purchased a residence in the Swine's Market (now High Street) from two brothers named John and Ralph Eaton, gentlemen, in order to make it his town house; probably adding to and beautifying it to a large

Lord's Place.

extent. "Lord's Place," as this was now called, was a stately mansion with wide-reaching grounds occupying the greater part of the space lying between the present East Bond Street and a point somewhat to the west of the line where Union Street now runs; a portion of its

THE "PORTER'S LODGE," 1891.

garden boundaries probably extending northward nearly as far as St. Peter's Lane. The ancient inn called the Porter's Lodge still standing at the angle of South and East Bond Streets was at one time, and with very different surroundings, the entrance to Lord's Place from the north-east; while a

humble tenement yet to be seen at the corner of Free School Lane and West Bond Street is called by tradition the "Gardener's Cottage," and plainly, in its walls at least, dates from a very early period. From the antiquity of the wall-material, and the fact that inside the adjoining dwelling, and supporting its open roof, is an ancient and massive carved oak beam of ecclesiastical workmanship, it is open to conjecture that both were originally built with part of the material belonging to the old Church of St. Peter, which probably stood on, or close by, this spot. At the north end of a neighbouring ancient wall, which was possibly part of the western boundary of the garden of Lord's Place and now encloses the burial ground of the Calvinist Chapel in Free School Lane, is a stone alcove, ecclesiastic in its structure, and locally called the "Summer House," which was probably included in the structure of the church itself. This piece of ancient stone-work is to be seen hidden away among certain back buildings adjoining a recessed part of St. Peter's Lane; and the fact that St. Peter's Church was fast falling into decay at the time that Lord's Place became the property of the Earl of Huntingdon seems to justify the theory that some portion of its materials were utilized in this manner.

An old timbered and gabled house, doubtless one of the minor premises belonging to Lord's Place, is yet to be seen in the narrow street called Little Lane, leading from West Bond Street into High Street; and it is likely that investigation among the older tenements in the area occupied by the Earl of Huntingdon would reveal much of the old timber and other building-material which once formed a part of this nobleman's residence.

The mansion itself, which fronted High Street, originally

possessed two stately towers of stone, of which one only, encased in brick, survived till a few years since. From this old-world relic all true lovers of their ancient town most reluctantly parted when it was demolished in 1902, that the old order might give place to the new, and modern needs thereby be duly satisfied. Here the Puritan Earl seems to have extended a hospitable welcome, and often pecuniary help, to many noted religious teachers of his own advanced opinions, as well as to lay personages of the highest social rank. Most of these notabilities, according to custom, were presented by the town authorities with gifts of wine, sack, confectionery, or fruit, during their sojourn in Leicester.

REMNANT OF "LORD'S PLACE," 1891.

At the close of November 1569, the same year in which he purchased Lord's Place, the Earl of Huntingdon who, with other noblemen, had been entrusted with the care of the unhappy captive Mary Queen of Scots, received the command of

Queen Elizabeth to transfer his prisoner from Tutbury Castle to Coventry. In carrying out this order, he first removed her to his Castle at Ashby, and thence to Leicester, the journey being performed on horseback; and as the Queen remained for a day and a night in this town, the mansion in High Street derives a pathetic interest from having been her resting-place. Much fussy precaution was taken to prevent any possibility of her escape. Mr. Kelly, from his researches among the Borough Accounts, tells us that "a vigilant watch was kept up during the night, candles having been provided for the use of the watchmen at the gates of the town and at the Town Hall, and the Gainsborough Chamber, (in the Market Place,) at both of which places also fires were kept burning." As a further security, we find a charge "for repairing the chains at the East Gate."* Mary, Queen of Scots in Leicester, 1569.

Seventeen years later, in 1586, her lengthened and cruel captivity then approaching its doleful end, the Scottish Queen again rested for a night in Leicester on her final journey from Tutbury to Fotheringay, where the last act of the tragedy was soon to take place. This time the sad and suffering lady travelled in a carriage under the escort of Sir Amyas Paulet and Sir Walter Mildmay, her health being shattered by rheumatism, unhealthy confinement, and general bodily and mental distress. She was lodged at the Angel Inn, which stood in the present Cheapside, and close to the East Gate; but beyond the record in the Borough Accounts of wine supplied, and also of night guards or watchers for the carriages of the party, we possess no details of her melancholy little visit.

The Earl of Huntingdon at one time interested himself in

* *Royal Progresses and Visits to Leicester.*—p. 293.

supplementing the efforts of the local authorities towards providing employment for the poorer inhabitants of the town, out of whom, under the demoralising bounty of the Abbey and other Religious Houses had arisen a large class of paupers and loafers, as before stated. The attempt to promote a cloth or "Kersey" manufacture was, however, abandoned after a trial of several years, chiefly on account of a want of agreement between the Earl and the Municipal body, upon various details in the working of the scheme.

The "Kersey" Manufacture fails.

The material and mental improvement of the population was now beginning to claim the attention of those in authority; and, partly from the loss of the educational element by the suppression of the colleges and chantries whose priests had found a secondary occupation in teaching,—and partly also, from the stimulating interest in Free Schools manifested both by King Edward VI. and his sister Queen Elizabeth,—the Municipal body now began to occupy themselves seriously in making more adequate provision for the instruction of the young throughout the town. Bishop Penny of Carlisle had, it is true, early in the sixteenth century bequeathed a piece of land for the erection of a School-house in Leicester, charitably recalling the needs of the town when he was Abbot; but this gift unfortunately bore no fruit, on account of its misappropriation by the Trustee. Not long afterwards, however, it is known that Thomas Wigston, brother of the better-remembered William, did actually found a Free School in High Cross Street, upon the site afterwards used for this purpose, and entrusted its guardianship to the Master and Confrater of his brother's Hospital. This Hospital, it is further stated, contributed £10 a year towards the maintenance of the School, from the income of

The Free Grammar School.

certain lands made over to it for the purpose. It would thus appear that William and Thomas Wigston acted to some extent conjointly in their benevolent enterprises. In the year 1565, one of the bells of St. Peter's Church, then disused and fast becoming a ruin, was sold by the Municipal body to pay for the repair of the then existing Schoolhouse; and the care and management of the School appears to have rested largely with them, for about the same date they made a grant for the annual stipends of three of its masters.

In the year 1572, however, a grand new Scheme was entered into, with a simplicity of proceeding which is amusing to our modern ideas, whereby, for the sum of £35 Queen Elizabeth, as head of the Duchy of Lancaster, agreed to sell to the Mayor and Burgesses of Leicester all the old material of St. Peter's Church to aid in constructing a new and substantial School-house,—the same to be covered with slates, and kept in repair out of the town funds. If any surplus remained from the proceeds of the sale or use of the Relics belonging to the church, it was to be directed towards bringing a supply of fresh water into the town for the general benefit of the inhabitants. This School-house, which is still standing at the corner of High Cross Street and Free School Lane and adorned with the combined Arms of Queen Elizabeth and those of the Borough, was erected within a year from the date of agreement, and a dwelling for the Head Master was added at the expense of the Municipal body.*

Erection of the Free Grammar School, 1573.

It may here be mentioned that the parish of St. Peter, (which already included the ancient parish of St. Michael, whose church had finally ceased to exist about 1490,) was

* The School-house is now in the occupation of Messrs. Spurway, as a Carpet Warehouse.

about this time added to that of All Saints (or All Hallowes). The exact date of the transfer by the Bishop of Lincoln is, according to the Register of All Saints' parish, the two and thirtieth of Elizabeth, *i.e.* 1590. The Queen's formal consent to the union of the parishes had been obtained by letters patent in the year 1586.

This Elizabethan Free Grammar School, the foundation of which may be said to form a distinct epoch in the history and development of Leicester, as the starting point for the general education of its inhabitants, remained the principal school of the town until the beginning of the nineteenth century. A document has been preserved relating to the rules which were laid down soon after its opening and signed by Henry Lord Huntingdon who, as its chief patron, doubtless took a keen interest in the School. A few quotations may be found interesting. "The scholars shall come to School from the first day of Aprill to the last of September at 6 o'clock; and from the 1st day of October to the last of March at 7 in the morning, and remain till noon. They shall always in the morning begin with some godlye prayers appointed; the Head Usher, or in his absence, one of the Prepositors, reading them. In the afternoon, winter and summer, they shall come to School at one o'clock, and stay till five, then before they depart, use the prayers appointed as in the morning for that use." Monitors were appointed weekly. "The recreation day, when the Schoolmaster shall think good of his own mind or by request, shall be Thursday in the afternoon, and no other day." The names of absentees for ten days in a Quarter, whether consecutive or not, were to be blotted out. There was no Saturday half-holiday, the course of lessons for that afternoon being as carefully laid down as for other

Its Rules and Regulations.

days. "A seven'night before the end of every Quarter, all the scholars, under the Schoolmaster and Head Usher, shall repeat all yt they have learned, without books, the Quarter before. * * * * In their play they shall use honest games, and shall keep themselves in one place appointed by the Master, only for shooting (at the Butts) shall be a meet place appointed likewise by the Schoolmaster. * * * *

Two Prepositors shall be appointed over ye Scholars playing in the fields, to note those which break the rules laid down for recreation, and deliver their names in a bill to the Master on ye day of correction," (which was Monday).

It would be interesting to look back across the centuries, and to catch a glimpse of the quaintly-clothed figures of our school-boy ancestors, flocking in and out of that ancient School-house not very far distant from the larger modern institution which is more or less associated with its original Founder,—which bears too, his honoured family name. Early and late, week days and Sundays, (special exercises and regular Church attendance being ordered for the latter,) year in and year out, did they toil at the dry and barren technicalities of the Latin Grammar and a Calvinistic Catechism, together with the most elementary forms of reading, writing, and arithmetic; and if one of those sixteenth century schoolboys could have taken a glance forward to the studies and recreations of the public-school life of to-day, he would have been as much astonished and bewildered by its varied attractions as his own dull drudgery would be pitied and derided by his successor of the present time.

CHAPTER XII.

Intended visits of Queen Elizabeth to Leicester.

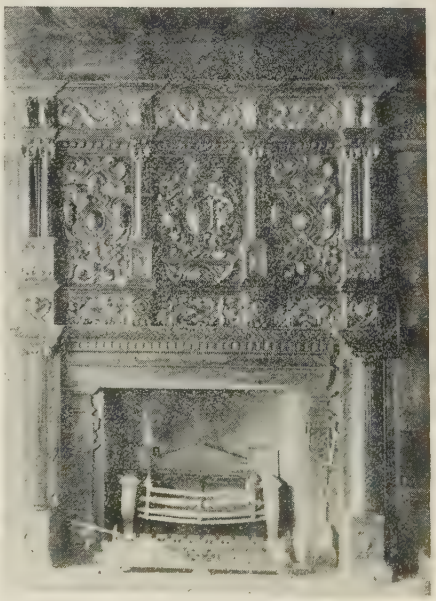
DURING the year 1562 and again in 1575 and several subsequent years the inhabitants of Leicester were fluttered for a season by the announced intention of Queen Elizabeth to visit the town during a royal Progress through the country. On each occasion the Municipal body and richer inhabitants contributed freely towards the general repair and setting in order of the Borough, much doubtless to its benefit. But in each case royalty was fickle, and Leicester during this reign remained unhonoured by a visit from the Sovereign. It is believed however, that the Queen once approached as near as Kirby Frith Hall, there being yet in existence on the walls of that residence a tablet bearing the initials E. R., with the Royal Arms and Fleur de Lys. An interesting gleam of light is thrown upon this conjecture by Mr. Throsby, who mentions that in the Act for the Enclosure of Leicester Forest in the time of Charles I. one of the entrances to it, near Kirby Muxloe, is called the "Queen's Gate." This was not far from the Oaks Farm, behind which, according to the testimony of a Mr. Carver, grazier, of Kirby Muxloe, from whom Mr. Throsby obtained his information, was once found "a pavement of large Forest stones, wide enough for two carriages to meet."* This was locally sup-

* *Throsby's History of Leicester*,—p. 173.

posed to be part of the old road traversed by Richard III. and his army on their march from Leicester to Bosworth, and which passed in a direct line from the Bow Bridge to Kirby Frith, and thence by the Oaks Farm straight on towards Market Bosworth. Mr. Carver further declared that the old road was still plainly visible, and no doubt Queen Elizabeth, arriving from Kenilworth or Ashby, would pass along it to the Frith Hall.

The Old Town Hall.

We must now glance for a moment at the Old Town Hall which, with the Mayor's Parlour adjoining, is so familiar and cherished an object in the eyes of old residents in Leicester. In the sixteenth century the still more ancient Hall in Blue Boar Lane had become quite inadequate to the needs of the town; and public sittings, and "Common Halls," as the Council meetings were termed, were in consequence generally held in the Hall of the Guild of Corpus Christi, to which most of the municipal body belonged. This Hall, no longer needed for its original purpose after the dissolution of the Guild, was purchased in the year 1563 by the



JACOBEAN FIREPLACE IN THE MAYOR'S PARLOUR.

INTERIOR OF THE OLD TOWN HALL.

[*See page 183.*

Recorder, Robert Braham, in the name of the Mayor and Burgesses of Leicester, from the widow of John Pickerill, of Norwich, then its owner. An addition was afterwards built at the end nearest High Cross Street, thus forming the handsome old Hall in which until 1874, the municipal business of the Borough was transacted. The Mayor's Parlour, with its richly-adorned Jacobean fireplace, quaint presidential chair, and motley and interesting row of stained window-lights, as well as the Muniment Room leading out of it did not exist, as we now see it, until the year 1637, when it was probably converted from a room connected with the Guildhall, and occupying the same situation.

The Town Library.

It may here be mentioned that the adjoining Town Library

THE TOWN LIBRARY.

Formerly the Chantry House of the Corpus Christi Guild. (*See next page.*)

which had its origin towards the end of the sixteenth century in a few scanty volumes placed on shelves in the Tower and afterwards in the Chancel of St. Martin's Church ; and added to, from time to time, mainly by the liberality of the Earl of Huntingdon, was in the year 1632 transferred, together with the Town Records, to the premises it still occupies on the eastern side of the Town Hall, overlooking the west door of St. Martin's Church. These premises are generally supposed to have been the Chantry-house occupied by the priests of the Corpus Christi Guild. The removal of the books was effected mainly through the exertions of Mr. John Angel, the Town Preacher and Lecturer at that date. This important local office, an outcome of the spirit of unrest and enquiry abroad in the latter half of the sixteenth century, was instituted partly from the reaction against ritual in the Church, and partly from the eagerness of the people for the expounding of Holy Writ and for frequent public addresses on political and social subjects. Thus it was one of the many duties of the Town Preacher to lecture on the topics of the day, as well as to preach on week-days in St. Martin's Church. He also conducted Divine Worship at the Hospital in the Newarke, for which he received an additional fee from the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster. The sanction of the Crown was necessary to ratify his appointment by the Corporation, who provided his salary ; but as the Public Preacher was also to a great extent dependent upon the encouragement and pecuniary help of the Earl of Huntingdon and other important townspeople if personally acceptable to themselves, the filling of a vacancy in the office was sometimes a matter of no little difficulty and contention, from the conflicting desires and interests of those concerned. Mr. John Angel,

The Town Preacher.

who was also Confrater of Wigston's Hospital and a strong Puritan, was appointed Town Preacher in the year 1627.

The year 1588 is a memorable one in the annals of Leicester. Moved by the impoverished condition of the town and the general depression of its inhabitants, which was probably represented to her through Mr. Francis Hastings, —one of the surveyors of the Duchy of Lancaster,—Queen Elizabeth had the previous year sent certain Commissioners to enquire into its actual state, and to report upon the condition of the lapsed properties of the ancient Guilds and Colleges. Having also received from the citizens an application for the grant of the decaying buildings of the latter, and various other privileges, she issued a Charter of Incorporation for the Borough whereby the Mayor, Twenty-four Aldermen, and Forty-eight Burgesses were made into a Corporate Body, henceforth entitled to own and to deal with property, instead of, as heretofore, holding it only by special license from the Crown. The Municipal Body being thus by the Deed of Incorporation enabled to hold, or to buy and sell houses and lands, and to sue or be sued in any Court or place under the name of "the Mayor and Burgesses of the town of Leicester," the Queen gave to them and their successors, in fee-farm, most of the lands and property of the old Guilds and Colleges,—the "week-day shambles," and the lease in reversion of the entire Newarke Grange, or South Fields, formerly in the hands of the Collegiate Church of the Newarke. All previous rights and privileges were confirmed by the new Charter, the grant of which therefore forms an important landmark in our local history.

Incorporation of the Borough, 1558.

An external subject of anxiety was now beginning to press heavily upon the authorities, both of town and county. The

national uneasiness and alarm felt at the increasingly hostile attitude of Spain, provoked by the reforming persecutions of Elizabeth, aroused a strong effort at head-quarters towards providing throughout the kingdom adequate means of defence in case of invasion. In the year 1583 Leicester, whose standing military force consisted of ten pikemen with helmets and corselets of iron, had been called upon by Government to equip and maintain double that number; while the county was bidden to furnish one hundred and thirty men-at-arms. Early in 1558, when the Great Armada was known to be assembling in the Tagus, the country was stirred from end to end by a passion of patriotism and resistance. The High Sheriff of Leicestershire, Mr. Thomas Skeffington of Belgrave, summoned for inspection all the males in the county capable of bearing arms, between the ages of nineteen and fifty; and out of the twelve thousand and odd who responded to the call, 2000 men were at once sent to the camp at Tilbury, while the remainder returned to their homes partially armed, and charged to hold themselves in readiness for instant service, should the dreaded Spaniards effect a landing. At the same time the town was ordered to furnish eighty men-at-arms; and forty of these, under the command of Sir George Villiers, marched to Tilbury, while the rest remained in reserve at home. By the 29th of July 1588, when the sails of the Invincible Armada were actually discerned from the Lizard Point, the news flashed by the beacon fires from hill to hill, and sped northwards by our Forest chain, found all England in readiness to meet the foe.

Preparations for the expected Spanish Invasion.

Within but a few days afterwards broken and disorganized by its successive encounters with the English war ships, which had resolutely dogged its progress up the Channel,

the baffled fleet was menacingly watched as it retired along our eastern and northern coasts; and when at length the work of destruction begun by our admirals had been completed by the fury of the storms which burst upon it among the Orkneys, and which pursued the diminishing host southward amid the dangerous channels of the Hebrides, the heartfelt thanksgiving of the English nation for deliverance from its peril was mingled with the deep lament of Spain over the loss of thousands of her brave Hidalgos, thus vainly sacrificed in the gigantic and ill-starred expedition.

The Armada Banquet in the Town Hall, August, 1588.

The defeat of the Spanish Armada was celebrated in Leicester by a grand banquet given by the Mayor Mr. George Norryce in the Town Hall, which is recorded to have been newly decorated for the occasion. More probably the addition and embellishments of the western end were only now completed, for above the Mayor's seat upon the daïs are to be seen the initials of Queen Elizabeth, with the date of 1586,—presumably the time when the work was begun. At this historical gathering, all the principal people of town and county were present, including the Earl of Huntingdon and his brother Mr. Walter Hastings, as well as the High Sheriff, Mr. Thomas Skeffington. After the banquet a play may possibly have been acted in the Hall for the amusement of the guests, for secular dramatic performances had now become a favourite pastime among all classes. Most of the great noblemen, as well as the Queen herself, maintained a company of players who visited different towns and were partially remunerated by their Corporations, the latter supplementing whatever was "gathered in the Halle," with the additional amount required to defray the expenses.

Many a band of strolling players has delighted our civic

forefathers within the walls of the Old Town Hall; and certain massive hooks, from which it has been suggested that the curtain was hung, (if indeed this now indispensable stage accessory was not an introduction of after times,) are still to be seen projecting from one of the beams near the upper end, which in that case would form the stage. Richard Burbage, the noted player who was the original representative of Shakespeare's Richard III., performed in Leicester many times; and Shakespeare himself, a member of the Earl of Leicester's Company, is generally supposed to have also acted here, although there is no direct record of his doing so. His patron's Company, which in 1589 took the name of "the Queen's Players," and had its headquarters in the Globe and Blackfriars' Theatres in London was perhaps the most important of these itinerant parties of players, and its members were frequently in this town, for the Earl of Leicester was brother to the Countess of Huntingdon, and from her and her husband they would naturally expect support. Juvenile companies of actors were also in existence at this period, and were very popular; and the record in the Chamberlain's Accounts of 1564 of the sum of five shillings "paid to the children that played under Mr. Pott," probably refers to a performance by the scholars of the Free Grammar School, of which Mr. Pott at that time was the Head Master.

Strolling Players.

In addition to the attraction of the Play with which he probably entertained his guests upon the occasion of the Armada Banquet the Mayor's official minstrels, or Town Waits, would be in attendance in the gallery at the east end, to enliven the feast with a flourish or an appropriate tune, as each of the principal dishes was carried into the Hall. The original Town Waits, like most other Municipal institutions,

The Town Waits.

have a history of their own, which may be briefly indicated from the very interesting information respecting them given by Mr. W. Kelly, in his *Notices of Leicester.*

The origin of the word "Waits," he tells us, is in the German "Wacht," a watch or vigil; part of the duties of these mediæval bodies being to patrol the streets of towns at night, giving notice of the hour or of any outbreak of fire.

The number of the Town Waits in Leicester, when they are first mentioned in the Chamberlain's Accounts for the year 1524, was only three, which remained the limit until the year 1645, when the gloomy Puritanical bias of the Town Council appears to have put an end to their modest services. After the Restoration, however, they re-appear,—increased to six,—and this was their usual number, while they continued in the service of the Corporation, *i.e.*, until the year 1836, when the Reform Act came into operation. Each Wait had a boy in attendance to carry his instrument, and also, as Mr. Kelly suggests, to serve a kind of musical apprenticeship under him. The Master Waits were each supplied with a scarlet gown or cloak edged with silver or, in later times, with gold lace, and they wore round their necks a chain and badge of the Borough Arms in the same metal. The Cinquefoil was also embroidered upon the sleeves of their gowns. When a Wait was appointed, he was formally presented with his badge of office, for which two sureties were required to answer for its safe return, in case of death or dismissal. The Waits' boys also wore gowns and a badge suspended round the neck by a green ribbon or lace, green and scarlet being the Leicester town colours, and as such, used for the municipal liveries until the year 1836. From the catalogue of the sale of the old Town Plate and

Insignia in that year, when the New Corporation ruthlessly swept away all these interesting and valuable historical relics, it appears that the number of musical instruments then in use by the Town Waits had consisted of two horns, two clarionets, four piccolos, and a bassoon.

The office of the Waits in earlier times, besides attending upon the Mayor on all important civic occasions, was to play in the town for the pleasure of the inhabitants every morning and evening throughout the year, and to perambulate the streets as musical watchmen every night;—no light duty, as it necessitated a constant exposure to all kinds of weather, and but a scanty allowance of sleep. A singular restriction, however, conferred the dignity of a monopoly upon the office, by ordering that no stranger-musicians whatsoever, nor any persons dwelling in the town other than the official Town Waits, should at any time or upon any occasion play publicly within the town,—"the time of the general Assizes only excepted, and then to play but only to strangers,"—a regulation somewhat difficult to carry out, one is inclined to think.

Among the sports and amusements for which public provision was made in Leicester during the Elizabethan period bear and bull-baiting and cock-fighting were in high favour with all classes. The town Records contain entries of moneys paid to the bear-wards or keepers, and of an annual rent for the Bear Garden. This may possibly have been situated outside the East Gate, near the Bear Hill or Barrel Cross which, according to an ancient local map, stood not far from the present Clock Tower.

The Bear Garden in Leicester.

It is recorded that bear-baiting to a limited extent, and trained performances by these and other animals, were some-

THE TOWN LIBRARY, 1891.

[See page 180.

times indulged in within the walls of the Town Hall itself, upon the occasion of a Mayor's Feast or other entertainment. Bull-baiting was equally popular among the rough and cruel pastimes of our forefathers in Leicester ; and to save expense to the town funds, as well as to ensure no lack in the supply of animals for the brutal sport, it had been economically enacted by a Mayor of the fifteenth century that no butcher should kill a bull which had not previously been baited for the amusement of the people. Cock-fighting, which retained its hold upon the public favour long after bull and bear-baiting had been condemned as barbarous, at this time had its special location at the Cock Pit, a sexangular building with a domed roof, which appears in Speed's Map of Leicester (about 1610) at the back of the Gallowtree Gate, between Rutland Street and Halford Street.

Bull-baiting and Cock-fighting.

CHAPTER XIII.

WE must now take a hasty glance at some of the features and institutions of Leicester during the latter part of the sixteenth century. The Saturday Market Place was by this time prominent, and the principal Inns appear to have been situated there:—the Angel in Cheapside, which stood by the still remaining gateway of that name; the Bull's Head, Green Dragon, White Swan, and White Hart; while, fronting the present Hotel Street, and looking towards the disused Monastery of the Grey Friars, stood the ancient sign of the Saracen's Head, now so artistically rebuilt.

Appearance of the Market Place in sixteenth century.

The southern and eastern sides of the Market Place, as we have seen, were enclosed by the town walls; and an additional gate, called the "Goltre Gate,"* now opened into it from the south-eastern corner. On the site of the present Fish Market, on the south side, was a pinfold for stray horses and cattle; while near this is said to have stood the Sheep Market.† Lower down was a large public heap of manure and refuse, doubtless forming one of the many sources of the terrible

* A corruption of Gallowtree Gate, or way leading to the gallows tree, then in use near the top of the London Road Hill.

† In a local map of about this period, the present Cank Street is however, named the "Shipp's Market."

epidemics which, time after time, still ravaged and decimated the town. Towards the same side, but nearer the centre, stood an important building known as "The Gainsborough," —a two storied structure, with a large upper room for magistrates' sittings and other public business, while underneath were a few open shops, and cells for prisoners. This interesting old building was taken down in 1748, when a new "Gainsborough,"—afterwards called the "Exchange,"—was erected on or near the spot, and remained in use until superseded by the present Market House.

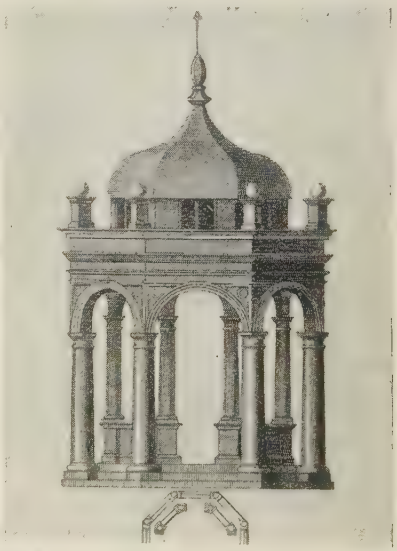
In the Market Place, and usually described as lying along its east side, although Stukeley's map distinctly places it on the south, ran the Cornwall, as it was termed,—a broad raised causeway, probably banked up against the Town Wall which enclosed the Market Place on both these sides; and here the farmers showed their grain, and horsedealers ran their horses from the Fair close by. The Cattle and Horse Fairs were held outside the south wall, in the meadows through which Horsefair Street now runs; these open lands being marked as the "Horse Fair Leys" in the local map of the period.

In the sixteenth century and for long afterwards, a pleasant and striking natural feature of the Market Place, was a luxuriant elm-tree, which for generations stood at the west end near the Bull's Head Inn, with seats under its spreading branches for rest and gossip. This tree, or a successor to it, was still flourishing at the beginning of the last century.

Outside the walls of the town were ditches or fosses,—that one running along the east wall from Gallowtree Gate to the bottom of Church Gate being fed by a brook which flowed down the side of the present London Road from the Gallows Hill, near the corner of the lane leading to Evington. The

The town wells and Well-reeves.

supply of water for the use of the inhabitants was derived from numerous draw-wells in all parts of the town, their superintendence being entrusted to officials called Well-reeves, two of whom were appointed yearly in each Ward to assess the residents for their proper maintenance. One of these public wells, called the Plancke or Kancke Well, was situated near the top of the present Cank Street, which takes its name from it. In Redcross Street and St. Martin's or Town Hall Lane were others ; while many more were scattered over the town. It is not likely that any surplus of funds remained after the erection of the Free Grammar School wherewith to carry out Queen Elizabeth's orders for introducing a supply of fresh water. A public Conduit was, however, made in 1612, when water was brought through leaden pipes from a spring in St. Margaret's Field near the top of the present Conduit Street and Workhouse, to a point in the Market Place nearly opposite the end of what we now call "Victoria Parade," where a small octagonal building known as "The Conduit" covered the leaden cistern in which the water was stored.



THE HIGH CROSS AS REBUILT IN 1578.
(From a print in Nichols's Leicestershire.)

In the year 1578 or thereabouts, the High Cross in the

Wednesday's Market which had existed from very ancient times, as the recognised centre of the town, was entirely rebuilt in the form of a small covered Market Hall of octagon shape, open at the sides, and supported upon pillars with rounded arches. Here, in addition to its use by the country people with their baskets of butter and eggs, municipal functions and sometimes criminal executions took place; and from its steps public proclamations were made. A Pillory was probably placed at or near this spot; and one of these painful instruments of correction is known to have occupied a prominent position by the Cornwall in the Market Place; while others stood at the Barrel Cross, outside the walls, and at the West Gate.

Rebuilding of the High Cross.

The Pillory.

At the Barrel Cross also appears to have been placed an obscure but suggestive form of punishment called the Cage, in which offenders were confined,—probably in a cramped position,—and exposed to the jeers and insults of lookers on. At no other spot in Leicester does provision seem to have been made for this humiliating process. As a correction for minor offences Stocks stood ready for use at the High Cross and in many other places;—viz., at the four Town Gates; at the Senvy, or St. John's Cross, outside the North Gate; at the Old Hall in Blue Boar Lane; at the Barrel Cross; under the Pillory in the Market Place,—and under the elm-tree already mentioned as standing at its upper end, in which the offender would have to suffer the additional mortification of prolonged pity or derision from the ale-house gossips sitting around. The town Records mention a Whipping Post, but its locality is not known.

Other punishments then in vogue.

While on the subject of punishments commonly in use in Leicester during the sixteenth century which, though harsh

and primitive, were certainly adapted to the rough methods of the times, the Ducking Stool or Chair for female scolds must have a passing mention. It was of very ancient origin, having been in use since Saxon times; and in many cases the mere threat of it had a sufficiently deterrent effect. If a virago, however, was not thus silenced, the Stool was taken to the door of her house, where she was fastened in it for an hour or two, exposed to public view and comment,—a proceeding one might reasonably suppose scarcely likely to restore her equanimity. In extreme cases the offender was drawn or carried in the Chair to the West Bridge, where the humiliating punishment was completed, and the actual ducking of three times in and out of the water took place amid the jeers of the rabble and the terrified entreaties of the wretched and half-drowned victim. One of these Ducking Stools is still preserved in the Museum. Sometimes small wheels were fitted under the legs of the chair, and the culprit was punished by being drawn through the streets to the four Gates of the town.

Establishment of The Wool Hall, about 1592.

A well-meant attempt to improve the trade facilities of Leicester and the neighbourhood was made at the close of the sixteenth century in the provision of a Wool Hall or Market at the lower end of High Cross Street, adjoining what we now call Causeway Lane. This Hall occupied the site and part of the structure of the ancient Hospital of St. John which, with so many other of the forfeited Guild and College properties, had been granted to the Corporation by Queen Elizabeth, and was now adapted by them to this purpose. In the year 1617 however, a Proclamation was issued by King James I., forbidding the "staple" or public market-sale of wool at other than certain specified towns in England, of

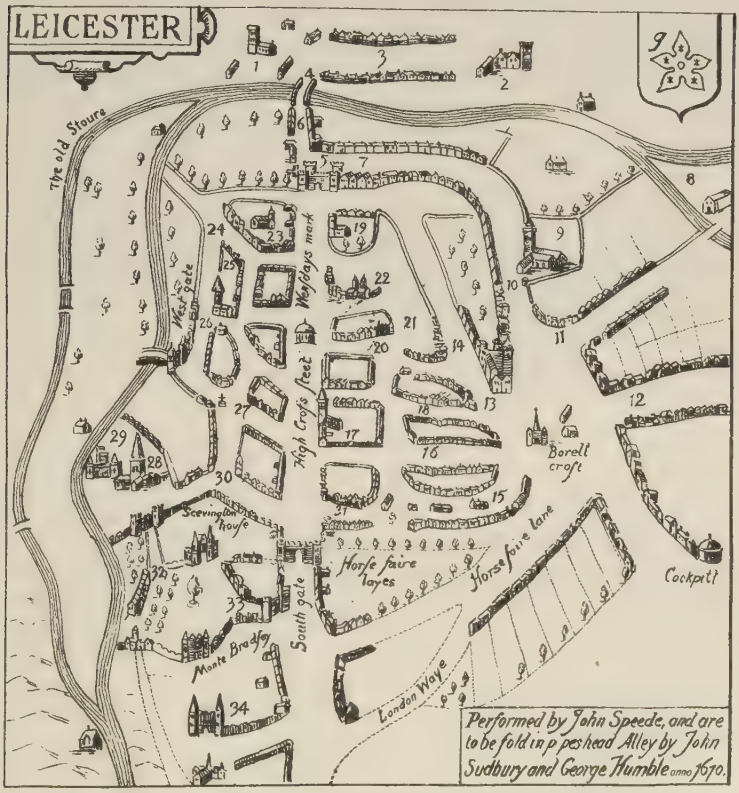
which Leicester was not one. The merchants of our wool-growing county felt themselves aggrieved at this, and petitioned the King, through the Duke of Buckingham, to add the name of Leicester to the privileged list. The request was granted, and this was henceforth ranked among the "staple towns" of England. Unfortunately, the farmers and country squires did not readily respond to the opportunity thus afforded them of selling their fleeces; and for want of supply, the new Market proved a failure. At the end of the reign of James I., the then disused Wool-Hall was converted, under the revived name of St. John's Hospital, into an Asylum for six poor widows, provided for by the Corporation. In the beginning of the eighteenth century, four more widows were similarly endowed by Mr. John Bent, and accommodated in the ground floor of the same building; and although the old structure has now vanished, giving place to a more modern and comfortable home, the two foundations yet exist on the old spot, and are still administered by the Corporation of the Borough.

St. John's Hospital.

Bent's Hospital added later.

Cheife places of ẏ Citie by figurs noted

1 S Leonards
2 Leicester Abbay
3 Abbay gate
4 Sundaye Bridge
5 North gate
6 North, gate street
7 Sinuis gate
8 The Spittle
9 S. Margarets
10 Churche gate
11 Belgrave gate
12 Humberston gate
13 East Gate
14 Swines market
15 Satterdayes market
16 Cankwell Lane
17 S Martines
18 Martins street
19 Alhallowes
20 High street
21 Huntington place
22 Woole Hall
23 Graye fryers
24 Gray fryers gate
25 S. Nicholas
26 S Nicholas shambles
21 Redd crosse street
28 S. Maryes
29 The Castell
30 Castell street
31 Black fryers Lane
32 Ould Hospitall
33 The newe warke
34 The Grange



SPEED'S MAP OF LEICESTER, 1610.

PART V.

The Siege of Leicester.

PART V.

The Siege of Leicester.

1645.

CHAPTER XIV.

DURING the short half-century which elapsed between the death of Queen Elizabeth and the first audible murmur of national discontent with the weak and arbitrary rule of the early Stuarts, afterwards culminating in the great Civil War, few events of striking local importance took place in Leicester, although several minor occurrences deserve a passing glance.

When, in the year 1603, King James VI. was summoned from Scotland to ascend the English throne, he had travelled from Edinburgh to London with a few attendants only, and was followed about six weeks later by the Queen (Anne of Denmark) and their two eldest children. Upon their journey southwards his family, on reaching Woollaton Hall near Nottingham, had separated for a few days; the Queen and little Prince Henry going forward to Ashby-de-la-Zouch, to visit the Earl of Huntingdon, while the young Princess Elizabeth (afterwards Queen of Bohemia) remained a short time longer

Visit of Queen Anne of Denmark and her children to Leicester, 1603.

at Woollaton, and was afterwards escorted to Leicester to rejoin them. Great preparations had been made in the town for the reception of the Queen and her children; and on the evening of the 23rd June the little six-year-old Princess, who was the first to arrive, was formally received by the Mayor at the North Gate, and conducted to the "White House in the Swine's Market, (or High Street, as it was then beginning to be called,) the residence of Mr. Robert Pilkington, — which had been made ready for her. Here she awaited the arrival of her mother and the little Prince Henry, whose reception in the borough was looked upon as an event of great interest and importance, in anticipation of which the four gates of the town had been repaired and decorated with the Royal Arms. The Queen entered Leicester by the West Gate which, we are told, had been colour-washed for the occasion. She was received by the scarlet-robed Mayor and Corporation, and presented with a rich silver cup, doubly

OLD HOUSES IN APPLEGATE STREET. 1891.

gilt, which had been procured at a great expense from London. A smaller cup was also presented to Prince Henry. After this ceremony the procession moved onwards, along the freshly-sanded and levelled route, by Applegate Street and the ancient Church of St. Nicholas, to the High Cross; and thence to the house of Sir William Skipworth (adjoining Lord's Place) in the Swine's Market. Why the little Princess should have been lodged in a separate house does not appear, but probably the accommodation in each was but limited. The town authorities had carefully studied the comfort of the illustrious visitors, and superior bedding, being that generally lent for the use of the Judges of Assize on Circuit at Leicester, was procured from Elmsthorpe, then the seat of Sir John Harrington. No details are recorded of the sojourn of the royal party, which lasted four days; but its close was marked by an annoying episode,—for after the Queen and her children had left the town to continue their journey towards London, it was found that various articles lent for their use, such as linen, pewter, and a horse, were missing, and had no doubt been purloined by certain of the large and irresponsible company of followers which always encumbered the Progresses of Royalty at that period.

The younger son of the King, little Prince Charles, who was at this time only four years old, and too weakly to bear the long journey, remained in Scotland until the next year. Then he too, with his escort passed through Leicester on his way to London, and was lodged at the house of Sir William Skipworth, which the Queen had previously occupied; furniture from the Recorder's room at the Town Hall being added to increase the comfort of the little prince, and to do honour to the occasion.

Terrible epidemic of Plague in 1611.

The year 1611 was memorable in Leicester from a severe visitation of the Plague, and stringent measures were adopted for preventing the spread of the disease. But while the danger of infection was fully recognised, any enlightened means of mitigating the terrors of the disease were as yet beyond the knowledge of the inhabitants. The infected houses were therefore marked with a cross; and to confine the danger to these and to the authorised parish Pest-houses, the town watchmen appear to have been provided with bolts to shoot at any wretched member of a stricken family venturing to show himself in the public streets. During epidemics of plague in neighbouring districts also, the life of the town was often brought almost to a standstill through the panic caused by fear of infection; and chains were put across the bridges to prevent the entry of strangers while, when the town itself was suffering from the pest, communication was often stopped from street to street, and business was almost suspended.

Visit of King James I. 1612.

In the year 1612, the Plague having died out, and the town declared free from infection, King James I., accompanied by Prince Henry, paid his first visit to Leicester, and was received with every demonstration of loyalty and respect. The Mayor with those of the Corporation who had previously filled this office, were mounted on horseback in their scarlet robes, while the "Forty-eight" had been required to furnish themselves with black gowns and ruffles, in order to lend additional dignity to the occasion. Escorted by twelve men decked out in the town armour, this quaint group of civic functionaries issued forth from their place of assembly in the Town Hall Yard, and proceeded with much ceremony along the old High Street, (which had by this time received its present name of

High Cross Street,) and through the North Gate to St. Sunday's Bridge, where they halted to await the arrival of the King. Having formally received his Majesty, and elaborately complimented him in a Latin oration pronounced by Mr. John Wincoll the "Town's Counsellor," the bareheaded Mayor, with the Earl of Huntingdon carrying the sword immediately in front of the King, led the procession back into the crowded streets of the town, which had been profusely decorated with greenery cut by permission from the Forest. Amid the shouts and greetings of the inhabitants the royal visitor was conducted to Lord's Place, where he spent a few days as the guest of the Earl of Huntingdon, and enjoyed the recreation of stag-hunting in the neighbouring country districts.

Several subsequent visits to Leicester were paid by this Sovereign, but these, however, grew to be less desired by the townspeople than dreaded as an unwelcome imposition, on account of the heavy expenses entailed in accommodating the crowd of retainers and hangers on who, like their royal master, showed no scruple in taxing to the very utmost the hospitality and resources of their entertainers.

In connection with a later visit of King James I. to Leicester in the year 1616, we are brought face to face with a painful result of the ignorance and narrow spirit of the times, in the superstitious fears which then largely governed the emotions of the people, and even influenced the judgment of those in authority. The prevalent belief in witchcraft which, during the seventeenth and part of the eighteenth centuries cost the lives of many thousands of innocent and defenceless women throughout the kingdom had led, shortly before the King's arrival, to the conviction of nine of these

poor creatures at Leicester, upon the charge of having exercised their unholy influence upon a young boy belonging to the village of Husbands Bosworth. The boy had recovered health and strength; but the nine witches had already appeased the fanaticism of their accusers by a simultaneous death upon the gallows, doubtless much to the edification of the multitudes who were drawn to witness so unusual and exciting an event. During the King's visit he sent for and personally examined the boy, who was no doubt the hero of the day; and probably from some accident rather than by his own natural acumen, he discovered the whole affair to be an imposition, whereby the lives of the nine poor victims had been miserably sacrificed. The Judges who had tried the case were summoned, censured, and disgraced; and as a further good result of the investigation, another batch of five women at that time imprisoned elsewhere in the county upon a similar charge were released by orders forwarded to the Sheriff, and thus saved from an unjust and shameful death.

Execution of nine witches in Leicester, A.D. 1616.

The year following the accession of Charles I. in 1625, is worthy of mention as the time when the Forest of Leicester on the western outskirts of the town, hitherto allowed to remain in its natural condition, and regarded by the poorer inhabitants as a mine of wealth for firewood, was enclosed by order of the Government, and the greater part converted into arable land. A determined resistance was made to the carrying out of this unpopular Act, which further interfered with the conveyance to the town of coal from the pits in the Swannington district, which it was the custom to carry across the rough forest tracks in panniers upon the backs of mules and donkeys. Some degree of compensation was finally

Leicester Forest enclosed, 1626.

made, however, by the investment in the hands of Trustees of forty acres of the Forest land, the rent of which was ordered to be annually divided in coin among the poor of the town. This was the origin of the local charity known as "King Charles's Wood and Coal Money," which is still annually distributed shortly before Christmas.

King Charles I. and his Queen visit Leicester, 1634.

In 1634 King Charles and his Queen Henrietta Maria visited Leicester, but their place of abode is not recorded. The King attended Divine Service at St. Martin's Church, where a throne was erected on a cleared space, and the church was adorned with greenery and strewn with rushes.

The friction between the King and the Parliament was now constant and increasing; and early in the summer of 1642 affairs were fast approaching the crisis of an appeal to arms. The traditions of Leicester, fostered during the reign of Elizabeth by the large-minded and liberal Puritanism of the then Earl of Huntingdon had usually been, as they still are, on the side of civil liberty and progress; and the kingly encroachments of Charles were viewed with great disfavour by a large number of the inhabitants both of town and county; a spirit of resistance and partisanship being thus engendered which was soon to bear the test of hard and bitter trial.

The principal sympathisers with the Parliamentary Opposition were the Earl of Stamford, then living at Bradgate; his son Lord Grey of Groby; Lord Ruthin, and Sir Arthur Hesilrige. These were afterwards joined by Mr. Archdale Palmer, High Sheriff of the County who, subsequently declaring for the Parliament was, in consequence, superseded in his office by Mr. Henry Hastings. The chief upholders of the King's authority, on the other hand, were Henry Earl of

Huntingdon; his son, Henry Hastings, above mentioned; William Earl of Devon, who lived at the Abbey Mansion, and many others, including the still familiar family names of Halford, Dixie, and Hartopp.

The "Commission of Array."

The King, who was now at York, issued his "Commission of Array" for Leicestershire on the 11th June 1642, ordering the local militia or train-bands to be called out and armed in the royal interest. Before the despatch of this document, however, he sent a message to the town authorities, condemning their reported action in having convened a muster of the standing forces on June 8th on the Cornwall in the Market Place, by order of influential members of the Parliamentary party. Upon his arrival in Leicester the royal messenger was suddenly confronted, near the Angel Inn, by the Earl of Stamford, at that moment personally engaged in making arrangements for the forthcoming inspection. A quarrel, into which the bystanders freely entered, took place, and ended in the King's messenger being compelled to withdraw, amidst fervent protestations from the crowd of attachment to the Earl's person, and sympathy with the cause of the Parliament.

Each party now sought to gain the upper hand by denouncing and obstructing the action of the other; and in the course of these rival proceedings the Magazine of Arms stored in the Newarke gateway was surreptitiously removed to Bradgate House by the Earl of Stamford, to prevent its appropriation by the King's partisans.

In the meantime Mr. Henry Hastings, the most active and prominent of the King's local supporters in Leicester, arrived bearing the document containing the Commission of Array which Charles had entrusted him personally to deliver to the

authorities, and ordered the High Sheriff to assemble the train-bands at the Rawdykes on Wednesday the 22nd June. On the morning of that day, surrounded by a crowd of followers, chiefly his own tenants and colliers from Derbyshire, whom he had gathered on his journey south from York and armed for the intimidation of the townspeople, Hastings rode into Leicester with much display and consequence, and finding but a meagre muster of the train-bands at the Rawdykes he proceeded to the Horse Fair Leys, where he spoke warmly for the King's cause, and then read aloud the Commission to the crowd who had assembled or joined him as he marched through the streets. Immediately afterwards, the votes of the two Houses of Parliament against the Commission were defiantly proclaimed by the High Sheriff; and a sharp scuffle ensued between the rival leaders, which was only prevented from becoming a general melée by the timely occurrence of a heavy shower of rain, which damped the matchlocks of the Cavaliers. Counter-warrants to seize the persons of the Earl of Stamford and Mr. Hastings were soon afterwards issued, both being declared traitors by their respective opponents.

King Charles again visits Leicester, July, 1643.

The town being in this divided condition, it was deemed desirable by the Royalists that King Charles should visit Leicester in person, in order to encourage the local supporters of his cause, and to intimate his displeasure at the lack of loyalty manifested by many people of importance. He accordingly arrived from Beverley in Yorkshire on Friday the 22nd of July, accompanied by Prince Charles, afterwards Charles II.; and also by his nephew Prince Rupert, who was soon to take a prominent part in the local struggle. The King was respectfully received by the Mayor and Corporation on the "Frog Island" beyond the North Gate, and escorted with due

ceremony into the town as far as Lord's Place, where he took up his abode. Charles remained in Leicester for three days, and the Assizes being in progress, His Majesty repaired to the Castle and personally addressed a large number of the town and county people there assembled, expressing the desire that all would assist the royal cause with vigour, and use every exertion towards furnishing supplies for his army.

The following day being Sunday, the King once more attended service in St. Martin's Church; and the occasion is recorded in the Borough MSS. as one of great ceremony. The robed

TOWN HALL LANE AND ST. MARTIN'S. 1891.

Mayor and Corporation proceeded to Lord's Place, and escorted His Majesty in a walking procession up the High Street to the High Cross, where they filed off to the left as far as St. Martin's Lane (now Town Hall Lane) and probably entered the church by the west door. In those days the shorter route from High Street by Cart's Lane did not exist, this thoroughfare not being formed till many years later, and named in memory of Dr. Samuel Carte, the well-known eighteenth-century Vicar of St. Martin's already more than once referred to.

Inside the church, which was adorned with green foliage, the loyal and devoted Countess of Devon* had negotiated for the erection of a throne or daïs for His Majesty; and the parish books record certain items of moneys paid to "Mr. White, the Countess of Devon's gentleman, for setting up the King's throne in the church," and "for flowers and herbs, and for six bundles of rushes to strew the church." The chair in which he is recorded to have sat is still preserved in the Town Library. Early the next morning, the King unexpectedly quitted Leicester, even before the municipal authorities had as usual assembled to attend upon him; and it may readily be conjectured that he was glad to escape from the irksome position in which he found himself in a town where a determined opposition to his cause was only too apparent. As a result of his visit, however, the neutral step was taken of breaking up the town store of arms, which seems to have again accumulated above the Newarke Gateway, and of distributing them in the several Hundreds

* This was Christiana, the widowed mother of the young Earl who supported King Charles's cause. She was the wife of William the second Earl of Devonshire, and still presided at the Cavendish Mansion.

throughout the county, whereby neither party gained any advantage over the other.

In August the King, accompanied by Prince Charles and escorted by a body of cavalry, again arrived in Leicester on his way to Coventry, on which occasion the young Prince was presented with a purse containing £50 in gold. Four days later they returned indignant and humiliated, for the gates of Coventry had been closed against them, and their followers repulsed. Charles and his son did not tarry a moment in the town of Leicester, but rode on to the sympathetic shelter of the Abbey Mansion, and remained there for the night. The next day, after dining early with their hostess, the Countess of Devon, they rode briskly forward to Nottingham, where the King that very evening, in the midst of a violent tempest of wind and lightning, hoisted his Standard upon a hill near the Castle, now called Standard Hill,—and thus, on the 25th of August 1642, gave the signal to all England for the commencement of the Great Civil War.

The Royal Standard hoisted at Nottingham, August, 1642.

Active hostilities soon followed in this neighbourhood. Within the next few days Prince Rupert and Mr. (now Colonel) Hastings, in command of an advanced guard of the Royalist cavalry which seems for a short time to have had its headquarters in Leicester, attacked the Earl of Stamford's House at Bradgate, and carried off a supply of arms and ammunition, besides injuring the furniture and threatening the household.

Prince Rupert soon afterwards withdrew from Leicester to Queniborough, where he established himself at the head of the whole body of the King's cavalry, and whence, on the 6th of September, he despatched his curt requisition to the Mayor of Leicester for the loan of £2,000 sterling, on

Prince Rupert's Requisition.

the morrow, "by ten of the clock in the forenoon." A concise postscript added that in default of immediate compliance, he should straightway "appear before your town in such a posture with horse, foot, and cannon, as shall make you know 'tis more safe to obey than to resist his Majesty's command." The town officials pleaded the poverty of their exchequer, and probably at the same time sent messengers to the King at Nottingham to beg release from the imposition; for a letter written in Charles's own hand is still preserved wherein he expresses surprise and displeasure at Rupert's conduct in making the demand, and discharges the Corporation from its fulfilment. Before the King's letter arrived, however, and through negotiation with Prince Rupert, the sum of £500 had already been conveyed to Queniborough by a party of gentlemen accompanied by six Dragoons, who were deputed to fetch it from the Town Hall, and to deliver Prince Rupert's written receipt for the sum named. The promise of repayment contained in the receipt was, it is almost needless to say, never fulfilled.

Not long afterwards the Prince, with the whole of his cavalry, was summoned to join the King's forces; and leaving this county, he proceeded with His Majesty southwards, retiring into winter quarters at Oxford, after a severe engagement at Brentford.

From this time until King Charles's army prepared to invest the town in May 1645, Leicester played no very prominent part in the national struggle; but the neighbourhood was frequently the scene of fierce skirmishes and desultory engagements between the rival parties, which kept the inhabitants in a state of constant alarm and insecurity. After the King had retired to Oxford Colonel Hastings, who about

Unsettled state of the County for more than two years

this time was created Lord Loughborough, and who was probably as unscrupulous and daring a spirit as any who held the royal Commission, established himself in his father's Castle at Ashby-de-la-Zouch and after largely augmenting his troop of horse by the great local influence he possessed began a series of encounters with Lord Grey, the son of the Earl of Stamford, which fanned into a flame the hostile spirit on both sides, and involved the county in a state of chronic warfare. Hastings also swept the country far and near in numberless predatory excursions, which he sometimes carried even to the very walls of Leicester, to the great annoyance and apprehension of its inhabitants.

CHAPTER XV.

IN the spring of 1645 the King left Oxford with the view of relieving Chester, which was blockaded by the Parliamentary army. On his northward march, however, receiving the news that the siege was raised, he formed the plan of investing Leicester, —which by this time was reckoned a formidable Parliamentary stronghold, in order to draw General Fairfax from his designs upon Oxford. Our town was in the weakest possible condition to resist a siege. Beyond the walls, it is true, an outer line of defence had been begun the previous year under the direction of Lord Grey; but it consisted of little more than a simple embankment protected by a fosse, and strengthened at a few important points by advanced horn-works; and even this slender fortification was still quite unfinished. The Newarke, as it formed a safeguard for the Magazine, had been more effectually dealt with. Here, however, a weak, possibly a fatal spot existed, through the refusal of a certain Master Wadland, Clerk to the Corporation, to allow that part of the wall to be fortified which lay close to a piece of land in his possession.

The King decides upon attacking Leicester, 1645.

It is probable that through the action of some disaffected person this circumstance had been made known to the Royalist leaders, for a premeditated attempt to seize the

Preparations for the defence of the town.

town was frustrated about the middle of May. After this alarm the town Committee, which had been formed to provide for the safety of the inhabitants in the uncertain state of affairs, fully awoke to the urgency of the occasion, and began to make hurried preparations for the clearly approaching crisis. A Common Hall was summoned, at which the whole of the municipal body took a solemn oath that they had had no correspondence with the enemy, nor had offered to assist him with arms or ammunition. The shops were ordered to be closed, and a list was drawn up of the citizens capable of bearing arms. The fortifications of the Newarke were pressed forward to completion; and fresh works were thrown up at the Grey Friars and the Horse Fair Leys, where the main guard was afterwards placed. The outer line of defence was also strengthened.

The available forces in the town proved to be deplorably small. The garrison did not amount to more than 700 men, to which at the last moment was added a body of 100 cavalry from Kirby Bellars, and a detachment of 200 dragoons who had been intercepted on their march towards Nottingham under the command of Major Innes, and pressed into the service of the town. The number of available townsmen was about 900; and thus, with the addition of 150 recruits from the country districts, the defending force only reached the total of 2000 or thereabouts. Letters begging for more troops and a fresh supply of arms were despatched to various quarters by the Committee, but without success; and Sir Arthur Hesilrige, who had been applied to for the purchase of 200 muskets for the garrison, was unable to do more than to send about 70 or 80 carbines in their stead. The Governor of the garrison was Sir Theophilus Grey; and acting with

Difficulty of procuring troops and arms.

him was Lieut.-Col. Whitbrooke, engaged in the emergency by the Committee as being an experienced officer who had seen much service in the Low Countries. The valuable assistance of Col. Sir Robert Pye, who happened to be passing through Leicester at this juncture, was also secured; and in grateful return for his promised co-operation they are said to have at once pressed upon his acceptance the sum of twenty gold pieces.

Approach of the royal army, May 28th.

The Royalist army, in the meantime, was rapidly approaching and closing in upon Leicester; and on the 28th of May Sir Marmaduke Langdale, at the head of the entire force of the Royal cavalry, after burning down three intervening windmills and a water-mill, formally invested the town on the east side, and sent forward detached parties to ride up to the lines of defence, in order to inspect and report upon the weak places. Bodies of the defending cavalry thereupon sallied from the gates under Major Innes and Captain Babington, and created much confusion in the Royal lines by vigorously attacking and driving back upon them the advanced picquets. In the afternoon of the same day a detachment of the town cavalry charged a troop of the Royalist horse, and pursued them as far as the bridge at Belgrave. In these encounters prisoners were made on both sides, and the work of preparation inside the walls was much hindered by the harassing excitement they caused, and by the constant fire kept up between the opposing parties. The town artillery was also hampered by the scarcity of horses provided by the Committee for shifting the few pieces of cannon from point to point along the line, according to the necessity of the moment.

On the next day, the 29th, the main body of Royalist in-

fantry, which had come up in three divisions, advanced close to the walls of the town, and proceeded to invest it on all sides. During the afternoon King Charles himself, with Prince Rupert, arrived upon the scene from the direction of Loughborough and, skirting the town, took up his quarters in the village of Aylestone,—either at the rectory or, more probably, in the picturesque Manor-house then belonging to the Earls of Rutland, which still survives to lend its aid in bringing the eventful scene more vividly before us. Prince Rupert at once proceeded to make preparations for attacking the town from the neighbouring Rawdykes, which afforded ready-made earthworks for his cannon. Here, throughout the evening and the whole of that night, he was actively engaged in superintending the construction of a battery facing the south wall of the Newarke, which had been decided upon as the chief point of attack.

The King arrives at Aylestone May 29th.

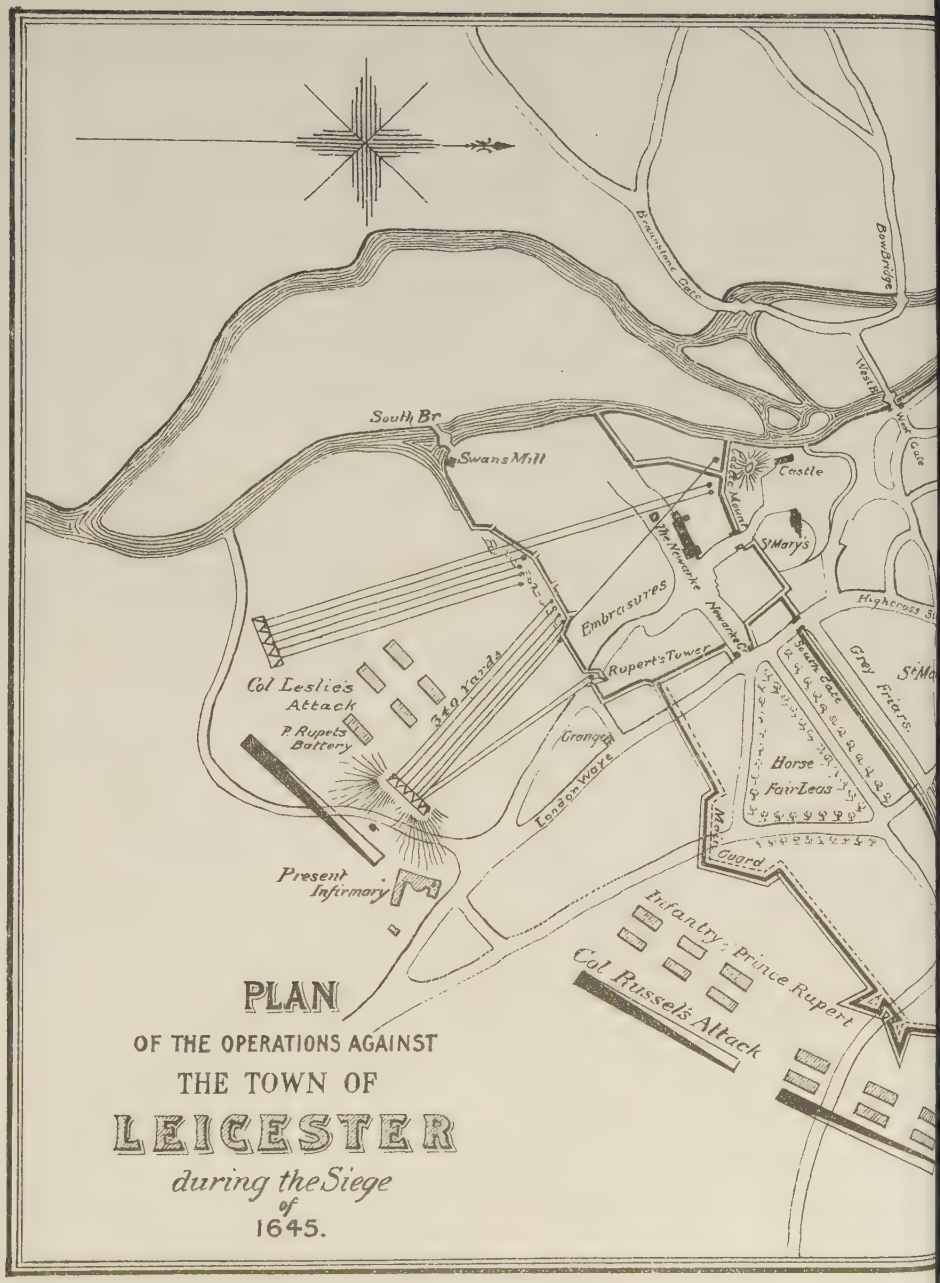
In the meantime, various encounters between the contending parties had taken place on the outskirts of the town; and certain houses near the North Bridge having been appropriated as a shelter by the enemy were spiritedly stormed by a party of volunteer townsmen, who succeeded in dislodging the intruders. The buildings were afterwards fired, to prevent any further use of them by the Royalists, but with the unfortunate result that the adjoining ancient church of St. Leonard was burnt to the ground. Its site remained unbuilt upon until the erection of the present church in the year 1877.

Destruction of St. Leonard's Church by fire.

The principal points at which the enemy had posted their divisions for attack were as follows:—

Position of the attacking forces.

1. On the further bank of the river, near the North Mill and St. Sunday's Bridge.



PLAN
OF THE OPERATIONS AGAINST
THE TOWN OF
LEICESTER
during the Siege
of
1645.

Pt of Sir B. Astley's Division
Attack on the 29th
RIVER SOAR
St Leonards
St Sundays Br
North Mill
North Gate Street
Friars
Abbey
North Gate
North Wall
Sir B. Astley's Attack
All Saints
Wednesdays Mark
Wool Hall
High Street
Huntington Place
St Margarets
Town Walls
Church Gate
East Gate
Belgrave Gate
Galtree Gate
Humberstone Gate
Col Sir H. Baird's Attack
Bart of Northampton's Horse

2. In the Abbey Meadow, facing St. Margaret's Church.
3. On the Belgrave Road, not far from the spot now occupied by St. Mark's Church.
4. Across the Humberstone Road, near the present Goods Station.
5. On the road to Harborough (now the London Road) near the end of the present Belvoir Street, and facing the horn-work which protected the Goltre Gate at the south-east angle of the walls.
6. At a spot somewhat to the south of the present Welford Place, this being roughly the position of the Main Guard, who occupied the advanced work outside the Horse Fair Leys. This latter point of attack was also directed towards the South Gate and wall of the town, and was occupied by Prince Rupert's infantry.
7. Troops were also stationed between the Rawdykes and the town, the main battery of the enemy being placed here, as we have seen, and directed towards the South Gate and the south wall of the Newarke. The total investing force is computed at about 10,000 men.

The fortifications.

By the garrison and the besieged inhabitants in the town itself, the Newarke fortifications were the points most jealously watched and guarded, as most inviting to the enemy; and here the command was entrusted to Col. Sir Robert Pye and Major Innes. Captains Babington and Hacker were appointed to the defence of the West Bridge, opposite to which no attacking force appears to have been stationed, and which may possibly therefore have been wrongly quoted for the North Bridge. The remainder of the fortifications, com-

prising those occupying St. Margaret's Churchyard, which is spoken of as a strong post,—and those placed in what we now call the Belgrave and Gallowtree Gates, both of which thoroughfares are mentioned as protected by an advanced horn-work on the outer line of defence, were entrusted to Col. Grey and Lieut.-Col. Whitbrooke.

During the night of the 29th the garrison in the Newarke was occupied in endeavouring, by a constant fire, to hinder the work of the enemy in constructing their battery opposite, in the direction of Aylestone, but which, before daylight broke, was finished and completely equipped for action. In the morning Prince Rupert, after the ceremonial discharge of two heavy pieces of ordnance from this battery, despatched a trumpeter into the town, offering pardon to the Mayor and Burgesses upon condition of immediate surrender. A Council of War was thereupon held in the Mayor's Parlour of the Town Hall; and after a long debate, in which the calm professional advice given by the stranger-officers Colonel Robert Pye and Major Innes to comply with the offer was scouted or ignored by many of those who had a greater personal stake in the issue, it was at last agreed to despatch a messenger to the Prince, with a request for leave to consider the matter until next morning. By this means the Committee hoped to gain time for further strengthening the fortifications in the Newarke.

Prince Rupert's message.

The Committee deliberate upon the question of surrender.

In the meantime, the indefatigable Rupert had been preparing another battery within four hundred yards of the Newarke wall, almost upon the site of the present Infirmary. It may justly be assumed, in considering the construction of this battery and the disposal of the King's forces in its neighbourhood, that the ancient Rawdykes, as asserted by

MAYOR'S PARLOUR IN THE OLD TOWN HALL. 1906.

some early historians, extended much nearer to the town than at present, so as to enter into the plan of action proposed by the Royalist leaders; and that this second battery, prepared on the very morning of the siege, was planted behind an elevation which had formed a detached portion of these venerable earthworks.

The request for delay irritated the impetuous Rupert, and the Town Messenger was ordered to return at once, with a peremptory demand for a decisive answer to his original proposal within a quarter of an hour.

Indecision of the Committee.

Even now the Committee hesitated, and were inclined to parley; and once again a message was despatched to beg for an extension of time. But the patience of Rupert was exhausted. The deliberations of the citizens in their quiet Parlour were suddenly cut short by the roar of the enemy's artillery from the south side; and quickly realising that action must now take the place of words, and that they had no choice but to make the best defence they could, the Committee hastily dispersed, some to central quarters in a house near the High Cross, to receive information and to issue orders,—others to the walls, to watch the operations and to encourage the soldiers to a resolute resistance.

Rupert commences his attack.

It was in the middle of the afternoon when the attack commenced; and at the end of three hours, a wide breach had been made in the south wall of the Newarke, and the enemy was seen preparing to level the defences and obtain a passage into the interior. But the garrison promptly proceeded to throw up a breast-work five or six yards inside the breach, lining it with wool-packs hurriedly dragged to the scene of action from the wool-staplers' yards in the neighbourhood. All hands were summoned to assist in the labour,

The breach in the Newarke.

and the women are recorded as having given the most active and fearless help, regardless of the shot flying around them. For the next six hours, under a continual heavy fire on both sides, the constant repairing of the breach by the besieged, and the work of levelling and filling up the intervening space for the free passage of their troops and cannon by the enemy, went steadily forward, while night gradually closed in upon the scene.

In the meantime a Council of War had been held by the Royalist leaders, and a general and simultaneous result agreed upon. Orders were hurriedly despatched to the commanders of each of the investing bodies to prepare for the attack in his own quarter. The names of most of these officers have been preserved. Sir Bernard Astley was directed to storm the town from the north side, beyond St. Margaret's Church; Col. Sir Henry Bard was to carry the horn-work and defences along the eastern line, which protected the Belgrave Road and East Gate; Col. John Russell, at the head of Prince Rupert's infantry, was to attack the main town battery outside the Horse Fair Leys; while Col. Leslie was to renew the assault upon the great breach in the Newarke. Prince Rupert himself was probably occupied in directing the cannonade upon this quarter from the batteries behind. The officer in command of the attacking force opposite the horn-work which protected the Humberstone Gate is not recorded by name.

The Storming at midnight.

At midnight the thunder of artillery burst upon the ears of the terrified citizens from all sides at once; and the troops pressing forward to the walls, the struggle began in earnest. In addition to the principal storming parties, various smaller detached bodies of the enemy advanced upon the lines at

intervening points, as many as twenty simultaneous assaults being made. The fight at the Newarke, where the cannonade was the hottest, was extremely severe and obstinate, the King's troops being repulsed no fewer than five times. Many deeds of individual bravery on both sides are recorded at this point; and a number of the Royalists' weapons and two stands of their colours were wrenched out of their hands by the soldiers of the garrison.

For a time the assaults upon all sides of the town were bravely repulsed. But the unequal contest could not last. Colonel Grey, the Commander of the garrison, hastening at the head of a body of cavalry to relieve a hard-pressed point near St. Margaret's Church, was severely wounded and taken prisoner; and after scattering the soldiery within the horn-works by a furious shower of hand-grenades, the enemy almost at the same moment carried the defences along both the northern and eastern lines. And now, planting ladders against the earthworks, and fighting their way through the reluctantly abandoned outposts, the King's troops began to gain an entrance into the town in these quarters. By half-past one, the defenders had been driven from every part of the fortifications except the Newarke; and the black ensign of Prince Rupert, hoisted upon the main town battery at the Horse Fair Leys, proclaimed that Leicester was now practically in the hands of the Royalists.

The enemy enters the town,

But the struggle was not yet over, and the garrison at the Newarke still held out. The victorious tide of assault, after pouring in at the South Gate, and at the breach in the south wall of the Newarke which the enemy had at length succeeded in renewing, had flowed rapidly through and beyond the ancient enclosure,—the King's forces driving before them

the soldiers and citizens, who stubbornly fought their ground step by step as they were borne back along the streets towards the centre of the town. The roar of musketry, the shouts and cries of the combatants, the tumult and confusion of the struggling throng, fitfully revealed by the light of torches and the flash of firearms, increased and deepened as it surged up the main, or South Gate Street, and approached the High Cross. Here the fray was swelled by other detachments of the town soldiers who had sullenly retreated up High Street before the victorious Royalists, fast advancing from the East Gate and other quarters. The fiercest fight of the siege now took place in the streets adjoining this central point; and once more the women of Leicester played an active part by firing muskets and throwing missiles upon the King's soldiers from the windows and housetops around. In St. Martin's Church and churchyard a determined stand was made by a party of the garrison; but after a hot contest, this position was finally carried by assault. For nearly an hour longer the struggle lasted,—during which a charge and counter-charge of cavalry took place along the main street between the High Cross and the Newarke, where the garrison of six hundred men still maintained their position. These, however, now threatened with an attack on all sides, had no choice but to surrender as prisoners of war, upon the offered conditions of personal safety and freedom from plunder.

The last struggle at the High Cross.

The contest was over; and although some fighting at the High Cross continued awhile, the struggles of the townspeople gradually died out, and they reluctantly threw down their arms and begged for quarter. By the early daybreak of the 31st of May 1645, the town had entirely ceased to resist. But scenes of violence and plunder followed; and

many defenceless citizens, both men and women, were killed in the streets;—some were even ruthlessly murdered in their own houses. It is said that in the house in which a portion of the Committee was still sitting, and from which certain Scotch soldiers had fired upon and killed several of the King's Dragoons, every one of the inmates was put to the sword.

Accounts vary, according to the political bias of the historian, as to the amount of bloodshed that followed the capture of the town. It is said that King Charles himself, after watching the progress of the siege from the Rawdykes, rode up to the High Cross, clad in bright armour, and vindictively encouraged the slaughter; and one Humphrey Brown, who afterwards gave evidence against him at his trial, stated that he heard the King exclaim, on witnessing a cruel maiming of prisoners by his soldiers at this spot, "I do not care if they cut them more, for they are mine enemies." On the other hand, it has also been affirmed that Charles, while riding through the town, earnestly called upon the people to abandon their arms and to beg for quarter. The statesman and historian Clarendon says, "the conquerors pursued their advantage with the utmost license, and miserably sacked the whole town, without distinction of people or places, to the exceeding regret of the King." There appears to be no doubt that the outrages of the soldiers against the property of the townspeople and garrison were carried to the utmost extent, and that they only escaped with their lives. It is on record that no fewer than 140 waggon-loads of plundered goods were afterwards despatched to Newark-on-Trent; and the Seals and Mace of the Corporation, besides many of the town archives, for a time totally disappeared. The

King Charles in the town after the Siege.

Statute Seal was afterwards re-purchased from a soldier, and the missing Charters were also redeemed in the same manner; but a new Town Mace had afterwards to be procured, as well as two other necessary municipal seals. The Royalists also carried away fifty barrels of gunpowder, more than a hundred muskets, and nine cannon.

King Charles remained in Leicester for two days after its surrender, housed at the Abbey Mansion, whence he levied the sum of £2000 sterling upon the unfortunate inhabitants in punishment for their rebellious opposition. After this, leaving Col. Henry Hastings, now Lord Loughborough, as Governor of Leicester with a garrison of 1200 men to repair the fortifications, he proceeded southwards with the intention of relieving Oxford. Immediately on his departure the Royalist soldiers committed an act of wanton mischief which seems difficult of explanation, by setting fire to the Abbey Mansion, which had sheltered him on more than one occasion, and which was thus destroyed and reduced to its present ruinous condition. Throsby asserts that the King's soldiers also blew up the old Town Hall in Blue Boar Lane, but gives no authority for his statement.

Destruction of the Abbey Mansion by fire.

An interesting fact connected with the siege of 1645 is the probability that John Bunyan, at that time a young soldier of about sixteen, was engaged in it. It is uncertain upon which side he served. He has generally been claimed by the Parliamentarians, but it would appear more probable that he had enlisted in the King's forces, as his family were Royalists. In either case the tradition is, that a comrade who on one occasion had supplied his place as sentinel during the siege of Leicester, was killed at his post,—which mishap, together with his own consequent escape, so wrought upon the mind of Bunyan that he dates his conversion from the event.

John Bunyan at the Siege of Leicester.

The Royalists did not long enjoy the fruit of their victory, for the disastrous battle of Naseby was fought on the 14th of June, only a fortnight afterwards; and from thence the King immediately fled at full speed towards Ashby, pursued to within a few miles of Leicester,—which he passed through without drawing rein,—by Oliver Cromwell and other officers of the Parliamentary army. General Fairfax quickly followed up his success by arriving with his army before Leicester on the 16th to join Cromwell, who had invested the town on all sides with his cavalry on the previous night.

Battle of Naseby, June 14th, 1645.

Leicester, however, was spared the horrors of a second siege; for although Lord Loughborough at the first summons of General Fairfax had defiantly refused to surrender, —and preparations for storming the town had in consequence been made by the Parliamentarians,—a speedy and well-directed fire against the Newarke wall soon resulted in another breach, which compelled the Governor to recognise the weakness of his position, and, from the great improbability of relief, the uselessness of further resistance. A capitulation followed, on fair and honourable terms towards both parties; and the garrison was allowed to withdraw, without arms, to Lichfield. Thus ended the Siege of Leicester in 1645; an event full of interest for every succeeding generation of its citizens. Although the south wall of the Newarke where the great breach had been made was, with lamentable indifference to its historic interest, demolished many years since for the erection of a row of cottages, its line above Fairfax Street may yet be traced in the house fronts of the north side of Mill or Bonner's Lane, leading from Oxford Street down to the river at the Swan's Mill. Accurate drawings of the wall, showing its roughly-filled breach, are fortunately

Lord Loughborough surrenders the town to Fairfax.

preserved at the Town Museum, where they will always remain valued objects of local interest. We should bear in mind that this was not the main or original town wall, but an addition to it made to enclose the New Worke or buildings of the Hospital and Collegiate Church erected by the Earls of Lancaster during the early part of the fourteenth century. A square tower which existed near the east end of the above-mentioned wall was, in memory of the siege, and especially of the cannonade from the batteries in front of it, ever afterwards known as "Prince Rupert's Tower." This has long since completely vanished.

PART VI.

Leicester at the End of the Eighteenth Century.

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CHAPTER XVI.

AN interesting glimpse of byegone Leicester may fittingly be taken at the time, now roundly a hundred and fifty years ago, when the town, after a long period of uneventful repose, was stirred by a welcome breath of fresh life; and under its stimulus was beginning to emerge from its antiquated existence, and to assume some degree of resemblance to its present condition and appearance.

The latter half of the eighteenth century was a period of enlightenment and growth in Leicester. The sleepy, old-world town, hitherto confined within itself by its mediæval gates and decaying line of walls, not greatly altered in aspect since the days of Queen Elizabeth, and not called upon, either, to play a prominent part in any event of national importance since the time of the Civil Wars, had continued year after year to lead a dull and prosaic existence. The period we are about to glance at, however, may be considered as the dawn of the modern era; and the conditions of the new life which

was then springing up, have advanced by natural stages into those under which we now live. New buildings, new institutions, new industries, now gradually arose; but the new high roads constructed or developed during the latter part of the eighteenth century most of all contributed to the growth and progress of Leicester by affording means of easier communication with other centres.

The Rebellion of 1745.

One stirring event, indeed, had agitated the even surface of the town-life shortly before the middle of the eighteenth century. The rising under the Young Pretender in 1745, and his march southwards to Carlisle, had caused great excitement among all classes in Leicester as elsewhere. The municipal body had neglected to take measures for supplementing the town forces,—many of them in fact secretly sympathising with the movement,—but a number of the inhabitants had eagerly come forward in the interest of the Government, and had regularly met for drill, both in the Castle Yard and in the burial-ground of the Great Meeting Chapel in Bond Street. When the news arrived that Charles Edward and his army had reached Derby on their march southwards, the excitement rose to a high pitch, and one historian records,—let us hope unfaithfully,—that a number of the volunteers now changed their purpose in face of the threatened reality of a conflict and, like many of the aged and weaker townspeople, hastily buried their valuables and retreated into country places to be out of danger. There appears to be no doubt that a strong Jacobite feeling pervaded the Corporation; and it is said that large quantities of cooked provisions, as well as a loyal Address, were in readiness for the rebels and their chief, upon their expected entrance into Leicester. The hopes and fears of both sides,

however, proved groundless. Baffled at Derby by the near approach of the King's forces, the army of the Pretender retreated northwards, and during the winter months remained inactive; but in April 1746, its defeat at Culloden crushed for ever the hopes of both the Scotch and English Jacobites. Great exultation followed this victory, and a day of national Thanksgiving was appointed. The Mayor and Corporation of Leicester attended St. Martin's Church in their robes of scarlet and black; and afterwards lunched together at the Three Crowns Hotel.* It is amusing to speculate upon the probable scope and quality of the fireworks which are recorded to have delighted the townspeople after dark on this occasion; and on the appearance of our old town with its simple illuminations, of which the High Cross, decked out with lighted candles, was the central and most striking feature.

Town rejoicings after the battle of Culloden, 1746.

The first important alteration in the outward appearance of Leicester which resulted from the onward impulse just beginning to be felt was the demolition, in the year 1748, of the ancient "Gainsborough" in the Market Place, and the erection on the same site of a new building to serve the same purposes, from plans submitted by "Mr. Mayor," at a Common Hall. This was named the "Exchange," a handsome red-brick structure, with stone facings and high arched windows. After a century of service, this in its turn was sacrificed to more modern needs, being replaced in 1850 by the present Market House, which was built somewhat to the north-west of the former edifice, and is itself the work of two periods,—the upper storey with its arched outside

The Exchange built on the site of the Gainsborough, 1748.

* This had been built about twenty years previously, and so named from the then recent union of the crown of Hanover with those of England and Scotland in the person of King George I.

stairway being added some years afterwards, for the purpose of a Corn Exchange.

The Haymarket Assembly Room erected in 1750.

Two years later another prominent building to meet newly-arisen needs was erected by private enterprise upon the open space outside the East Gate, then known as the Coal Hill or Haymarket. This was an Assembly Room to accommodate the public social gatherings which now began to take place in Leicester, and for which the Castle and Guildhall were increasingly unsuitable. The building, which had no architectural pretension, consisted mainly of a large upper room supported upon columns, and facing the Humberstone Gate. The other end, looking towards High Street, was occupied by one or more shops. In and around the open space beneath the columns coal from the Swannington and Coleorton districts was daily delivered to the dealers in Leicester from the backs of heavily-laden mules and asses, who had patiently plodded their way to the town along the rough country tracks leading from the collieries. The contents of the country hay waggons also, which the low-arched East Gate refused to admit had, from very early times, been unloaded and sold on this spot, which either was identical with or lay close by, the Round or Bare Hill (corrupted to Barrel) of former days. For more than half a century the Haymarket Assembly Rooms continued to be the centre of the fashionable social life of Leicester; and many were the balls, concerts, and theatrical entertainments held there. These were often made additionally brilliant by the presence of the county families; for London not being then easily accessible the country gentry not unfrequently varied the dull routine of rural life by repairing in their lumbering carriages to the nearest county town, where they put up at one of the numerous Inns,

and entered with zest into the amusements frequently going forward. Very notable gatherings were those which occurred in Leicester during the winter of 1759, when the Suffolk Militia were quartered here; and numerous balls and festivities were given in their honour. During that season a theatrical company also gave representations three times a week at the Assembly Room, and the Comedy played on these occasions was usually a "bespeak" by one of the fashionable ladies then visiting the town.

In the municipal and social life of England the greater part of the eighteenth century was pre-eminently the era of feasting, conviviality, and gossip. Perhaps this arose from the leisure conferred by the absence of important political events; possibly too, from an impetus received in its direction from the sociable German element introduced into society with the Hanoverian rulers of the country. Several public town feasts were annually held in Leicester, such as the Mayor's Feast, following his election; the Venison Feast on the 1st of August, which still commemorated the Defeat of the Armada; the Tradesmen's Feast; the Singer's Feast, and others. The Florists also held an Annual Feast, flower-growing competitions and shows even then engaging the eager attention of this trade and its patrons. It is probable that many of these were exhibitions of tulips and other rare Dutch bulbs, introduced by William of Orange at the close of the seventeenth century, and much prized in England. Carnations of at least four different colours were also widely cultivated at this time.

Annual Town Feasts.

Early hours were the rule at all entertainments. In the announcement of a Ball to be held at the Castle of Leicester in November 1722, it was stated that there would be "no

admittance after four o'clock." This was the hour at which the Mayor's Feast also usually commenced; and from the inordinate amount of toasting and drinking then in vogue, the orgie would sometimes be prolonged until two or three o'clock the next morning. Dancing and card playing, interspersed with tea drinking and gossip, occupied much of the time of the fine ladies and gentlemen of the period. Cock fighting, however, was the absorbing amusement of most men of fashion; and a new Cock-pit now stood upon the site of the present Assembly Rooms in Hotel Street. For the lower classes football, single-stick, and wrestling afforded a more genuine and wholesome recreation,—but they had also numerous pastimes of a more brutal nature.

Social recreations of the upper and lower classes.

Bowling was a favourite game among the inhabitants of Leicester; and in 1736 a public Bowling Green was provided at the expense of the town in part of the Horse Fair Leys outside the South wall. The present Bowling-Green and Horse-Fair Streets still indicate the site of this public play-ground of our great great-grandfathers.

The Bowling Green.

Horse racing was in high favour among all classes; and Meetings had been held in the level ground of the Abbey Meadow since the early days of James I. when the sport, in itself of long standing in England, is said to have received a fresh impetus by the training for racing purposes of the descendants of the swift and fiery Spanish steeds long ago cast upon the western shores of Scotland by the wreck of the Armada. In the year 1742 however, owing to the constantly recurring floods in the Abbey Meadow, and the inconvenience of occasionally running horses knee-deep in water, the Race meetings were transferred to a portion of St. Mary's Field, now partly occupied by the Cattle Market,—where an ex-

Horse Racing: the Meetings transferred from the Abbey Meadow to St. Mary's Field, 1742.

cessively muddy track and the necessity of crossing and recrossing the turnpike roads leading to Aylestone and Wigston, must somewhat have marred the enjoyment of the sport. We have the testimony of Mr. William Gardiner, an old and well-known inhabitant of Leicester remembered by many persons still living, that in his early days the race horses made a circuit to the south-west of the present Infirmary; galloping round by the Knighton windmill, (which formerly stood upon the high ground above the main entrance to the present Cemetery,) to the Aylestone toll-gate, (which stood opposite to the gates of the present Cattle Market,) and passing by the Rawdykes into the meadow beyond, then called the "Flat," at the end of which stood the Winning Post. The Race meetings were removed to the present Victoria Park in 1806, and from thence to the new Race-course near Oadby in 1884.

To return to the more solid affairs of the Borough. Soon after the erection of the Exchange and the Assembly Rooms, a small weekly paper called the *Leicester Journal* made its appearance, (May 12, 1753,) and offered to the inhabitants a novel form of recreation by detailing a few items of town news, interspersed with advertisements, and largely supplemented by reprints from the London journals.

The *Leicester Journal* first published in 1753.

This was an onward movement; but the development of the town soon received a still stronger impulse from the Acts of Parliament which were procured by the Corporation between the years 1752 and 1754 for forming turnpike roads between Leicester and Ashby-de-la-Zouch, Hinckley, Uppingham and Narborough. The previously existing high roads in the neighbourhood were probably at the same time levelled and improved.

New Turnpike Roads, 1754.

We have no definite knowledge of the history of the present London Road. It has been seen that, in early days, the principal road passing through Leicester from London to the North entered the South Gate from the direction of Wigston and Welford; and after forming the main street of the Borough passed out under the North Gate,—afterwards turning to the right along the Abbey Gate to continue its course towards Loughborough and Nottingham. This was the usual route by which companies of travellers, up to comparatively modern times, proceeded to and from the Metropolis. That the present London Road in some rudimentary form had, however, been in existence from a very early period is shown by the fact that the expected arrival of the London rioters against whom the men of Leicester had turned out with so much spirit and determination in the days of John of Gaunt, was awaited by them on "the Gallow-tree Hill, on the road leading from Harborough;" and when Queen Anne of Denmark visited Leicester in 1603, she passed out at the East Gate on her journey to Market Harborough; her course being probably continued by the line of the present London Road. The headlong flight of Charles I. after Naseby had also been along the present familiar road, through Glenn and Oadby. The local map drawn by Carte and Stukeley in 1722 marks this as the "London Road by Harborrow," and ignores the Wigston route altogether; while the earlier and more generally-known map by Speed, "performed" about the year 1600, clearly indicates the latter as the "London Waye," and gives the former no name, although its course is shown running south beyond the Gallowtree Gate. This would seem to suggest that between these dates this road had been widened

The London Road.

and improved; and it agrees moreover with a statement made by Mr. Gardiner that during one of the visitations of the Plague early in the seventeenth century the old route was abandoned from fear of infection, and that travellers passed outside the eastern wall instead of entering Leicester by the North Gate. At the time at which we have arrived, when the other roads now leading from Leicester are stated to have been formed, or made into "turnpikes," no mention is made either of the London or the Welford Roads; and it therefore seems allowable to infer that both then existed in fairly good condition,—their maintenance perhaps already insured by toll-bars.

Good roads being now opened, increased traffic and improved communication with all parts soon followed; and in the year 1760,—not indeed, until long after their introduction in some other localities,—the phenomenon of a Stage Coach first appeared in the streets of Leicester. This was advertised by the proprietors, Richard Nedham and Company, to run from London to Nottingham through Market Harborough, Leicester, and Loughborough, in two days, "if God permitted." From the similarity of names and dates, though not coinciding in every particular, this would appear to be the coach mentioned by Mr. Gardiner as the original Leicester Coach, which was started in his father's time, and set out every Monday morning from "The Gateway" in Townhall Lane, (probably that of the Queen's Head Inn at the east end of St. Martin's Church,) drawn by four or six heavy, long-tailed, black horses. The passengers slept two nights on the way,—at Northampton and Dunstable,—and arrived in London on the Wednesday. On the return journey the coach started on Thursday and reached Leicester

on Saturday. Four years later, this was superseded in point of speed by what was announced in the *Leicester Journal* as the "Flying Machine," to leave the Three Cranes Inn, Gallow-tree Gate, at two in the morning, and to reach London the same night, carrying four passengers. Surely nothing more dismal could be imagined than rising in the small hours of the morning to travel with chance companions for hours along the dark roads, with the prospect, if fortunate, of reaching London "the same night,"—the probable time not specified for obvious reasons, among which were the badness of the roads and the frequent attacks of highwaymen. In 1777 an advertisement appeared in the *Leicester Journal*, announcing that a "London and Manchester New Diligence" would start every morning from both these towns, meeting and resting the night at the Swan-with-two-Necks, in Leicester. This coach ran through Welford to Northampton. "Post-coaches with Postillions on a new plan" followed, leaving the Lion and Dolphin in the Market Place for London, through Harborough and Northampton, Woburn, Dunstable, St. Albans and Barnet; while others were presently announced as fitted with "steel springs."

The first Mail Coach passes through Leicester 1785.

In the year 1785, the first Mail Coach, carrying letters, passed through Leicester. This being a Government enterprise, the vehicles were especially well appointed, and showily decorated with the Royal Arms. The London Mail reached Leicester about nine in the morning, and that from the North early in the evening; and for months, in the quiet town, the greatest events of the twenty-four hours were the expected arrivals of the two Mail Coaches, whose approach was announced by a discharge of fire-arms to clear the streets as they rattled over the uneven stones to their halting place.

Here a crowd of loungers daily awaited them, eagerly gathering round to admire the turn-out, and to discuss the King's liveries of scarlet and gold worn by the coachman and guards, who were fully armed with blunderbusses slung round their shoulders, and pistols stuck in their belts.

Every year the roads improved, and coach travelling increased until, during the early part of the nineteenth century, the highways throughout England were lively with swiftly-running vehicles, whose teams were the admiration of all who beheld them, and whose drivers, fired with emulation in outstripping one another on the way, or in performing their journeys under a given time, not unfrequently afforded their passengers a very considerable amount of excitement, not unmixed with danger. It is recorded that more than fifty coaches daily passed through Leicester at this period. The invention of railroads in course of time, however, put an end to these "old coaching days;" and their remembrance and manifold associations generally call forth expressions of mingled pleasure and disgust from those among us who have experienced the uncertain joys of this mode of travelling.

Inns in Leicester at this period.

While upon this subject, mention should be made of the Inns which played so important a part in the local arrangements for travellers. When the present London Road became the chief route to and from the Metropolis, Inns and Posting Houses began to spring up in and near the Gallowtree Gate, in particular.

Of these, the principal were the "Three Crowns," already mentioned, standing on the site of the present National and Provincial Bank, and dating from the year 1726; the "Three Cranes," which faced the Gallowtree Gate, and whose stable-

yard still exists behind the gateway leading to the Congregational Chapel; the "Lion and Lamb," opposite, not many years since pulled down to make way for shops; the "Bell," in Humberstone Gate; and several others at the upper end of Belgrave Gate. Mr. Gardiner mentions the "White Horse" in Gallowtree Gate, in the stable-yard of which the stone coffin of Richard III. was at that time in use as a drinking trough. He also describes, as standing in his father's time in the present Granby Street nearly opposite our Leicestershire Bank, a small roadside hostelry called the "Jolly Miller,"—its thatched roof pleasantly shaded by a group of trees. Adding to the rural features of this outskirt of the town, and lying between that Inn and the coal-yard then at the corner of Rutland Street was a horsepond, he tells us, in which the stablemen from the "Crowns" and the "Cranes" washed their post-horses.

There were several good Inns in the Market Place, although the famous old "Angel" in Cheapside no longer headed the list. The principal ones at this time were probably the "Lion and Dolphin," "Bull's Head," "White Hart," "White Lion," and "Green Dragon." Near the latter stood a fine old tree, either an elm or a sycamore, under which Mr. Gardiner tells us the country-women in his young days clustered with their baskets of pigeons for sale; these birds being extensively reared by the farmers in the neighbourhood, and in great demand as a cheap and palatable article of food. The "Pigeon Tree," as it was called, was probably the identical one known to have existed on that spot ever since Queen Elizabeth's days; sheltering beneath its leafy branches both the gossips with their mugs of beer seated on the benches outside the "Green Dragon" Inn, and the luckless wight

confined in the Town Stocks, within all too easy reach of their taunts and gibes.

In the Town Hall Lane near the East end of St. Martin's Church stood the Queen's Head Inn, as already mentioned, from which, in 1760, the first coach had started to London. Further on, at the junction of this thoroughfare with High Cross Street, was the "Nag's Head," with its picturesque wooden porch, and which was demolished when the adjoining site was appropriated for the building of the Wyggeston Boys' School in 1876. Nearly opposite, at the corner of Thornton Lane and High Cross Street, was the "Golden Lion;" and higher up, the "Horse and Trumpet," a prosperous and well-known Inn at this period; while beyond the High Cross, the venerable "Blue Boar" still presented its finely timbered front to the busy thoroughfare, maintaining its interest for the historian and the antiquarian, although no longer important as a place of entertainment. This valuable relic of mediæval Leicester was, in 1838, ruthlessly destroyed, and unhappily nothing but the name of the street connecting it with the Square of St. Nicholas now remains to mark its site.

PORCH OF
THE NAG'S HEAD INN.

Private travelling at this period.

In addition to the public coaches, the high roads were now gay with the numerous "post-chaises," in which the more moneyed classes made their journeys, and which were supplied at the posting-houses to be found in every town and large village throughout the country. In fact, the period extending through the latter half of the eighteenth century and the first half of the nineteenth may be described as the golden age of road-travelling, driving, and horseflesh generally; the "turn-outs" both of public and private owners being a matter of the first consideration and importance in their estimation, and that of the public also.

The county families usually travelled in their large heavy carriages drawn by two, four, or six horses; and, like the public conveyances, carried with them under the so-called "hammercloth" beneath the coachman's seat a box of tools wherewith to repair damages on the way. A journey in one of these private chariots to the county town was often a matter of time and consequence; and lucky were the party inside if the axles of their ponderous vehicle escaped fixture in the deep ruts of the cross-country roads,—involving much delay and consequent loss of temper in all concerned,—whereby the unfortunate horses were usually the greatest sufferers. Much pride in their teams was taken by the country squires. It was customary then, as now, for the High Sheriffs of counties to attend and escort the Judges into the towns for the Assizes; and when Mr. Charles Hesilrige occupied that position about the year 1770, he drove through Leicester with the Judge in a carriage drawn by six fine chestnuts, and attended by thirty javelin men in green and buff liveries. The cortège was preceded by a marshal, two trumpeters with silk flags, and two men with French

The High Sheriff's equipage.

horns; the latter performing a flourish to announce the Judge's arrival at the Castle. Two servants in green, two pages, and several footmen closed the procession, which was greatly admired as it passed through the town. In 1774, when Mr. Clement Winstanley held the office of High Sheriff, a still more important procession drew great crowds to witness it. Thirty gentlemen in a uniform of blue cloth with crimson collars, white waistcoats, and white breeches, formed a voluntary escort; and four hundred horsemen also joined the cortège. The remnant of all this dignity still accompanies the Judge on Assize days in the Borough, and were possibly better dispensed with altogether, under the flippant and more sophisticated scrutiny of the busy modern public of the streets.

The attempted Enclosure of the South Fields, 1755.

During the middle of the eighteenth century a protracted antagonism existed between the Corporation and the poorer freemen of Leicester concerning the enclosure of the South Fields. The exclusive privilege of renting this open space, which extended from the Horse Fair Leys to the southern boundaries of the present Victoria Park, had been conferred upon the Mayor and Burgesses by Earl Simon de Montfort in the thirteenth century; and the land had finally been bought by the Corporation in the reign of Queen Elizabeth. At the period we are dealing with, the South Fields were partly laid out in arable farms for which the Corporation received rent, while the remainder consisted of grass land which, from the month of September until February was, by ancient privilege, granted as open pasture for the use of the freemen. The Corporation were now desirous of enclosing the whole of the Fields, instead of letting off a portion of them in farms. In 1755 they passed a resolution to the effect

that after the expiration of the existing leases these farms should be grassed and not re-let and, like the remainder of the land, should be at the service of the freemen after September for pasturing their animals. So far, the freemen were gainers by the larger extent of pasture land devoted to their use during the autumn and winter months; but by the proposed Act of Enclosure their privilege from time immemorial of the right of "aftermath" on the whole estate would be abolished; and in this lay the chief sting of the matter. Another grievance in connection with it, which the Corporation was allowing to pass unheeded was, that in spite of their formal Resolution, the Commissioners for letting the town lands had already granted fresh leases of farms to two aldermen and another person, who were accused of influencing to their own advantage the drawing up of the leases.

No explanation or compromise being offered, the irritation of the Freemen quickly increased. They suspected the Corporation of tampering with their rights in the one instance, and of directly infringing them in the other. This was resented by the municipal body, who increased the mischief by passing an arbitrary Resolution to exclude "such of the Freemen of this Borough as this Corporation shall think proper from turning any horses, cows, or other cattle in the South Fields Meadow belonging to this Corporation." This exasperated the people in the highest degree. In September 1755 an angry crowd marched to the South Fields and destroyed all the posts and rails which had been set up, of which they made bonfires for a fortnight; and later on, mobs broke the windows of the Town Councillors' houses, and reduced the streets to a shattered and pitiable aspect.

The advice of Counsel was now sought by the Corporation,

and the reply in brief was, that under the existing leases the Freemen undoubtedly had a right to destroy the new fences; but that it would be advisable to cancel the agreements of the present leases, and to draw up fresh ones which should not reserve to the Freemen themselves any rights whatever, except as might be afterwards granted to them in individual cases by the Corporation, who also had the power of proceeding against any Freeman who pastured his animals in the South Fields without their express permission. "This," says Mr. Thompson, "was certainly an encroachment upon the ancient rights of the Freemen of Leicester, each and every one of whom, under the Charter, had the right without selection of pasturing their horses or cattle in the South Fields." At a Common Hall in 1757 the Corporation ordered that "the present tenants of the South Fields, on surrendering their present leases, shall have new ones granted for twenty-one years from Michaelmas last;" "that all the fields be laid down as grass ground;" and that the Freemen should have liberty to turn in cattle, according to Counsel's opinion, and at the discretion of the Corporation. These directions were in the main carried out, and as no attempts at arbitrary exclusion appear to have been made, the dispute came to an end, and the greater part of the South Fields remained unenclosed until about the year 1811. Some five years previous to this date, however, the Corporation had devoted certain of the Closes to the formation of a public Race-course, to supersede the one then in use near the present Cattle Market. After about eighty years of service, this in its turn was abandoned in the year 1884, as already stated, for the new Race-ground near Oadby; and, by a wise administration, this portion of the ancient South Fields now remains, under

its modern appellation of the "Victoria Park," an increasingly valuable open space and place of recreation for the inhabitants of Leicester. It may be added, that upon the subsequent enclosure of the South Fields certain lands lying on the south-west side of the town, as well as what is now called the "Freemen's Common," were allotted to the Freemen of Leicester in compensation for their ancient rights of pasture in the South Fields.

CHAPTER XVII.

IT has been mentioned that John Bunyan was present at the siege of Leicester, and that he dated his conversion from that event. It is also recorded that he visited and preached in this town during the reign of Charles II., and was lodged in a house which stood until recent years in St. Nicholas' Street, nearly opposite to the Church.

The same house, occupied in the year 1753 by Mr. John

HOUSE IN WHICH BUNYAN AND WESLEY WERE LODGED.

Coltman, was the abode for a few days of the celebrated John Wesley. This then rising divine preached one day during the summer of that year at Markfield Church, whither Mr. Coltman rode over to hear him. After the service, he begged Wesley to return with him to Leicester, which he agreed to; and so great was his fame even at this early period, that when he preached that evening in the Butt Close, crowds came running from all parts to hear him. In 1757 Wesley again preached in Leicester to a congregation of, it is said, nearly a thousand, assembled in a large room licensed for public worship in High Street, and belonging to Mr. Lewis, a hosier and a Presbyterian, but also deeply interested in Methodism. Three years afterwards Wesley paid another visit to Mr. Coltman and preached in the Castle Yard; but rain interfering, he finished his discourse at the "Tabernacle" in Millstone Lane, at five o'clock the next morning. In 1772 he addressed large congregations in the same building, which was the one mentioned in a former chapter as used at a very early date as a tithe-barn, and possibly on one occasion, for a Meeting of Parliament. It had since served the purposes of a play-house, riding-school, and storehouse for coals, and was locally known as the "Old Barn" when purchased by Mr. Lewis in 1753 for use by the Methodists. It had a high, thatched roof, open and timbered inside, and supported by wooden props. The windows were near the roof, and the place in consequence so dark that artificial light, in the form of a three-branched wooden candlestick, was often used during service in the day-time. Men and women sat apart in this interesting but certainly uncomfortable place of worship; and in the year 1787 it was taken down and a commodious chapel erected on its site by

Visits of John Wesley to Leicester.

the congregation who had perforce used it as a meeting-house in the absence of better accommodation. The last visit of John Wesley to Leicester occurred in 1790, when he was more than eighty years of age; and as the venerable preacher passed through the streets, his white and flowing locks and saintly presence evoked the reverent salutations of all who met him.

French prisoners in Leicester.

In the year 1756, during the war between England and France, a number of French prisoners were sent to Leicester on parole. As many were of good birth and education they were welcomed as a pleasant addition to the society of the town, and were courteously entertained until their exchange the next year for English prisoners.

Town Pumps erected.

About the period we are considering, the supply of water for the inhabitants of Leicester was improved by the erection of pumps above the public wells scattered through the town; and Pump-reeves now took the place of the more ancient Well-reeves in superintending their maintenance.

Many of these town pumps are still remembered; the Cank Pump, for instance, its site now marked by a circle in the pavement at the top of Cank Street; the pump in Town Hall Lane, now replaced by a drinking fountain; another in High Cross Street; besides two more in Church Gate, and several others. In a recessed corner of New Street, and fenced off from the footway by a wooden railing a pump yet remains, by no means picturesque in itself, but yet pleasantly in keeping with the quiet air and surroundings of that old-world quarter. This, however, was not for public use, but for that of four of the adjacent private houses, and it is still preserved as a relic by the owner, a well-known lover of antiquity.

The Conduit in the Market Place.

The Conduit in the Market Place, which in the year 1709 had been rebuilt and enlarged, still, and for long afterwards, afforded the most copious supply of town's water, and this was considered to possess peculiarly valuable properties for making tea. On several occasions of great public rejoicing the Conduit was made to run with ale or wine for the benefit of the lower classes, who crowded and struggled together to fill their jugs and cans. The old octagonal building was removed in 1841, and was superseded by a less obstructive column erected over the well, and surmounted by a lamp. In 1852, this again gave place to a bronze statue of the Duke of Rutland, from the pedestal of which the water was supplied by means of a tap. A few years later, the Leicester Waterworks having been established, the use of the Conduit was no longer deemed necessary. This ancient supply of water was therefore cut off, and the statue of the Duke, disfigured by a coat of gilding, was removed to its present position in the centre of the Market Place. It is interesting to know that portions of the original Conduit, with the slab which had been inserted when it was rebuilt in 1709, have been carefully preserved, and now form part of a memorial erection in the grounds of Mr. Thomas Ingram, of Wigston.

Cattle Markets and Fairs.

In the year 1763 occurs the first mention of a regular Cattle Market in Leicester, although from very early times sheep and pigs had been publicly sold in the town in localities specially allotted to them. The new beast Market was ordered to be held on Wednesdays in the Market Place, in or near Cheapside; but the position afterwards proving inconvenient, it was removed in 1774 from "near the East Gate in the Borough of Leicester, to the wall adjoining the Three Crowns Inn, and to extend straight along the Millstone Lane

NEW STREET AND ST. MARTIN'S CHURCH.

(See page 251.)

towards the South Gate Street," by order of the Corporation. The Cattle Fairs in May and October were now ordered to be held in High Cross Street; and here they sometimes extended throughout the whole line from Oxford Street to Sanvey Gate. Sheep continued to be sold weekly in the Market Place or Cank Street until a new Sheep Market was formed, early in the nineteenth century, near the spot where the Municipal Buildings now stand, and somewhat below the site of the old Bowling Green. At this latter period the Cattle Market still occupied its old position in and about Horsefair Street; but instead of standing along the thoroughfare, most of the cattle were now confined in strong pens on the space lying between the Sheep Market and Granby Street. Here not only the weekly markets, but the principal part of the Sheep and Cattle Fairs continued to be held, until the opening of the present Cattle Market outside the town, in the year 1872. The Leicester Swine Market, originally held in the present High Street, was in the eighteenth century removed to East Bond Street, formerly called Parchment Lane, and afterwards Swine's Market. Later on it was held in Free-school Lane and West Bond Street, near the old Wool Pack Inn, (now long since demolished); and here it was suffered to remain until it was finally transferred to the New Cattle Market in 1872.

Peace rejoicings in 1763.

On the conclusion of a Treaty of Peace with France in 1763, known as the Peace of Fontainebleau, great rejoicings took place in Leicester, as elsewhere. A Day of Thanksgiving was appointed, and the robed Mayor and Corporation attended Divine Service at St. Martin's Church. They afterwards repaired to the Town Hall, where they were joined at an elaborate luncheon by a number of the chief residents

both of town and county. Following the repast an Ode to Peace was performed in the same building by orchestra and chorus, the music being composed by Mr. John Valentine, a local professional musician; and a grand procession was then marshalled which, from its partly symbolic character, and the business-like manner in which it was carried out, looks somewhat like a survival of one of the mediæval Pageants. At four o'clock the long stream of heterogeneous personages composing it issued from Town Hall Lane into High Cross Street headed, as the quaint programme states, by the "Halbert men, two and two," and by gunners, drums and fifes. Following these were two Lodges of Freemasons; "The Tyler;" Masters and late Masters of Lodges; Wardens, Secretaries, Deacons; "the other Tyler;" trumpets, and "a grand band of music, voices and instruments,"—being, in fact, the performers of the Ode to Peace just mentioned. Then walked the High Sheriff, Clergy, Officers and Gentlemen, two and two; the Mayor and Recorder, with Aldermen, Councillors, "Tradesmen and so forth." Heralding the chief items of the procession now came more drums and fifes, and presently "Jason on horseback," with a page on either side. Next rode the "Bishop's verger," preceding "The Bishop in an open landau, drawn by six horses, with three postillions and four pages, all habited. His lordship in a gown and cassock, a Mitre of wool on his head; in one hand the Book of Common Prayer, in the other a woolcomb." This was a representation of Bishop Blaize, the patron Saint of the Wool-combers,—a numerous body of workers in the town. Then came a "Shepherd and Shepherdess on horseback," and two others on foot; followed by a large stage built on a waggon, with two wool-combers at work, two doublers, two

spinners, a framework-knitter at his machine, and a crown of wool upon the stage. A rearguard of twenty or more combers, "all habited in wool wigs, with sashes, ruffled shirts, and grey stockings," walking three and three, closed this unique procession, which perambulated the chief streets and drew up in front of the Exchange. There the Ode was performed a second time, and the members then dispersed, the gentlemen being afterwards regaled inside the Exchange with ale and wine in which to drink the healths of the King and Queen. In the evening the ladies were entertained at a Ball and cold collation; and the Exchange was ablaze with illuminations, of which a full length figure of His Majesty King George III. formed the chief attraction. This Peace-Procession was a great event in the town, and the streets were filled with spectators, who also crowded the windows and balconies, and even the housetops. Private arbours garlanded with flowers arose at intervals along the route, and were used by the more wealthy inhabitants as places of refreshment for their friends. Wine or ale flowed from the Conduit in the Market Place; sheep, lambs and pigs were roasted whole; and all work was suspended for a general holiday-making by the people.

Pares's Bank established 1763.

The same year witnessed the commencement of the first banking enterprise in Leicester. The *Journal* of December 31st 1763, announced it thus,—"We are credibly informed that Mr. Joseph Bunney and Mr. Thomas Pares, both of this place, purpose taking upon their notes, payable to Bearer, any sum that shall be offered to 'em, and will allow £2 per cent. per annum for every sum amounting to £25 and upwards, from the end of thirty days after the time of its being advanced." It is satisfactory to note that this enterprise

succeeded, and that under new proprietorship it still remains one of our most solid and respected banking establishments.

The lighting of the Streets.

A matter in which our great-grandfathers were slow to move was the lighting of their dark and ill-paved streets. It is true that in 1749 a Bill for "enlightening and cleansing the streets" had been petitioned for in Parliament, but without success; and for many years the subject had been allowed to slumber. In 1761 however, when coach-traffic had been established, and social evening intercourse was also more frequent, it became a matter of necessity that lights of some kind should be provided in the streets at night. The dwellers in Gallowtree Gate therefore subscribed to procure oil-lamps to light their thoroughfare; and their spirited example was soon followed by the inhabitants of Belgrave Gate. After nightfall however, the rest of the town was shrouded in darkness, save for the occasional gleam of a lamp behind a curtained window, or the faint glimmer of a rushlight in a more lowly dwelling,—or again, where the unsteady progress of a lantern over the uneven pavement betokened the path of a cautious citizen along the streets, or of a party bent on an evening's amusement at a friend's house. In the course of a year or two the use of oil lamps became general; and during the large and brilliant Race Meeting of September 1770, the company attending the Ball at the Haymarket Assembly Rooms had the satisfaction and novelty of seeing whither they were being conveyed in their sedan-chairs or private carriages.

Sedan-chairs.

Sedan-chairs were much used by the upper classes. They may be described as hand carriages for one person, borne on two long poles by men walking before and behind. The roof was on hinges, and opened with the door, which was at the side; and the windows were curtained, so

that the occupant could be screened from the gaze of passers-by. It was usual to bring the chair into the halls of houses on entering and leaving it; and with steady bearers it was rather a convenient mode of transit. Wheeled carriages for the use of the public were not introduced into Leicester until the first part of the nineteenth century, when one or two, under the name of a "Fly by night" from their more rapid motion, were procurable for evening visiting. These vehicles were at first drawn by a man, though afterwards improved by the substitution of a pony or horse. Many of the ladies of Leicester however, not using sedan-chairs, still went on foot to evening entertainments, preceded by a servant carrying a lantern. The term "Fly by night" was shortened to "Fly," as these conveyances came more generally into use; but they were few in number, and could only be obtained by previous arrangement. It was not until the year 1850 that Flys began to stand for hire in the public streets, this useful institution being introduced through the exertions of Mr. Biggs, whose family were at that time prominent in everything relating to the welfare of the town. In this enterprise he was assisted by several other gentlemen, who each agreed to take a number of "tickets" for the purpose of encouraging the Fly proprietors. The old term "Fly" is now universally superseded by "Carriage" or "Cab,"—the latter an abbreviation of the French "Cabriolet," by which name these vehicles were called when first introduced into London about 1830, where they gradually took the place of the old Hackney coaches.

The origin of Cabs in Leicester.

The year 1771 saw the establishment of the most important philanthropic Institution of which Leicester can yet boast. The idea of temporarily housing the sick poor of the town

and county under the care of competent medical treatment had originated three or four years earlier with Dr. Watts of Medbourne, a member of the family then living at Danet's Hall; and through the warm advocacy of the Bishop of Lincoln, (then the Diocesan,) who addressed a letter to his clergy urging them to promote the scheme among their wealthier parishioners, a subscription list was opened, and substantial sums were promised towards the erection of an Infirmary. By the end of the year 1767, a spot known as the "Chapel Close" was purchased, and was described as "a dry and airy piece of ground, situate at the South end of the town, upon the London Road leading to Wellingborough." The site was that of the ancient small Church of St. Sepulchre, belonging to St. Mary de Castro,* though at what date this building had ceased to exist there appears to be no record. It also occupied, as near as may be, the position of Prince Rupert's second battery when besieging the town of Leicester. Plans and tenders for the erection of a suitable edifice, not to exceed £15,000, were invited, and that of Mr. Wyatt adopted. The successful building contractor was Mr. Henderson, who pledged himself to complete the work before the month of May 1770. As not unusual in later times however, delays arose; and it was not until September in the following year that the Infirmary was finished and ready for the reception of patients. Arrangements were made for a ceremonial opening on the 11th September 1771; and as the time drew near, the county subscribers flocked to the Inns and houses of their friends in town, to be in readiness for the great event.

The establishment of the Infirmary, 1771.

On the morning of the important day a large body of the

* St. Mary's Church was often thus designated in early times, to distinguish it from the Abbey Church of St. Mary de Pratis.

Subscribers or Governors waited upon the Bishop of Lincoln at the Three Cranes Inn, and a procession to St. Martin's Church was formed, where a grand musical service was followed by a sermon from the Bishop and a collection in aid of the new Institution. The procession was then re-formed, and moved onwards by Highcross Street to the Infirmary; and our minds instinctively picture the good Bishop, in gown and lawn sleeves, with the attendant clergy and Dr. Watts, the gratified initiator of the scheme, heading the long line of Governors as they trudged over the rough pavement of the streets amid the respectful silence of the lookers-on, who probably missed the accustomed colour and romance of a "Procession" in the prosaic and ordinarily-clad figures now passing before them. Under the portals of the South Gate, —past the Newarke Gateway and Hangman's Lane opposite

THE NEWARKE OR MAGAZINE GATEWAY. 1835.

(now Newarke Street),—down to the horsepool and pinfold near the present Carlton Street,—the quiet band of philanthropic pioneers wended their way to the spot where the new and goodly building stood before them, henceforth to open its hospitable doors to the sick and suffering of any county, sect, or nation. The regulations for the government of the Infirmary had previously been drawn up and accepted, and were mostly suggested by Dr. Vaughan, at that time the principal physician in Leicester. After the opening ceremony, the chief members of the procession returned to the Three Cranes, where an Ordinary had been prepared, while their lady friends dined separately at the Three Crowns At night all met again at the Haymarket Assembly Rooms, where a concert had been arranged by Mr. Joseph Cradock of Gumley Hall, and the Rev. Charles Jenner; the first-named gentleman being an enterprising musical amateur, who had been assisted in the engagement of the London performers by his friend Mr. David Garrick, the great actor.

Thus amid social and harmonious intercourse was inaugurated the work of the Leicester Infirmary, which has since proved an inestimable blessing to the town and neighbourhood, and which still heads, as it must always continue to do, the many charitable efforts which the humane impulses of modern civilisation and science have set on foot to benefit the people.

St.Margaret's Catch-Club.

Music, and especially part-singing by a few voices, was now beginning to be cultivated in Leicester; and there existed at this time a small musical society called the "St. Margaret's Catch-Club," formed of the choristers of that church and the singers of the Great Meeting Chapel, which had a wide reputation for its good music. This Club gave an annual dinner to which the principal gentlemen of the

town were invited. Thus in 1774 its members announced that "there will be a Concert, gratis, at the Assembly Rooms at 11 o'clock; after which the company will adjourn to the Three Cranes to dine at two." As time went on and musical taste developed, wider enterprise naturally followed, and in 1785 a series of Subscription Concerts was set on foot, mainly through the efforts of Mr. John Brooke, a local dilettante whose house, Mr. Gardiner tells us, was a complete museum of valuable books, pictures, engravings, and choice musical instruments. Other interested residents joined the movement, including the Rev. Robert Burnaby, vicar of St. Margaret's, and his son the Rev. Thomas Burnaby; the Gardiners, father and son, and several other amateur musicians, besides the Valentine family, who were Professors of Music in the town. Twenty-five concerts were given during the year for the small subscription of fifteen shillings; for the expenses were few, and as the talented Valentines received only half-a-crown apiece on each occasion, the outlay in this direction was extremely modest. The Burnaby family was a very musical one, and their enthusiasm and influence did much to promote the love of music in Leicester both at this time and for long afterwards.

Subscription Concerts in 1785.

Musical Services, marking the anniversaries of the opening of the Infirmary, were held in St. Margaret's Church in September 1772 and 1773. On the first occasion parts of Handel's oratorio, "The Messiah," and his Coronation Anthem were performed, the whole of the music being presented by Mr. Cradock, who at all times was enthusiastic in encouraging the cultivation of music and the drama in Leicester. A large gathering from the town and the neighbouring counties assembled in honour of the event: the Governors of the

Infirmary Anniversary Services.

Infirmary previously meeting at the Assembly Rooms, and proceeding in a body to the church. An Evening Concert and Ball were afterwards held. The next year a similar performance again took place at St. Margaret's; and the event was made additionally interesting by the opening of a new organ in the church. At the time of the Commonwealth the organs in most of the parish churches of England had been either destroyed or discarded; but after the Restoration their use began to revive, and a fresh era of organ-building commenced, which reached its climax about the middle of the eighteenth century. Between the years 1770 and 1780 the three principal churches in Leicester were enriched by the erection of new and more powerful instruments,—the last, in St. Mary's Church, being opened in 1777.

Re-building of church organs in Leicester, 1770-1780.

In September 1774, preparations were made for Infirmary Anniversary Services on a still larger scale, which resulted in the most important local musical celebration of the century. It took place in St. Martin's Church, where the new organ by the well-known builder, Snetzler, had lately been completed and raised to concert pitch so as to accompany an orchestra, which would have been impossible with the ancient and more primitive instrument.* A temporary platform was erected to accommodate the largest assemblage of musical

Infirmary Musical Anniversary, at St. Martin's, 1774.

* Upon the recommendation of Mr. Cradock, Miss Greatorex, the daughter of Derbyshire parents of humble birth, was now appointed organist of this church, although only thirteen years of age. She retained the post for many years, and was held in great respect in the town. Her brother, who had been sent to Italy to study music, became a celebrated organist and teacher of singing in London; and as a musical director he was in request all over the country. He often visited Leicester, and delighted his friends here by his masterly performances upon his sister's organ.

NAVE AND CHANCEL OF ST. MARTIN'S CHURCH. 1906.

performers, says Mr. Gardiner, ever yet gathered in this country. Again the indefatigable Mr. Cradock was the life and soul of the proceedings which, from first to last, were most brilliant and successful. The company formed a procession from the Haymarket Assembly Rooms to the church, where a grand instrumental overture opened the service. Mr. Gardiner records his impressions as a child of four years old, seated on the orchestra by his father's side, and "mightily pleased" with the energy and display of Lord Sandwich, who had charge of the kettle-drums. Much attracted, too, was he by the appearance and demeanour of the black Otaheitan Prince Omai, who had been brought to England by the well-known traveller Captain Cook, and was now the guest of a gentleman among the audience. This striking personage stood up during the whole of the service, in rapt astonishment at the proceedings,—himself an object of curiosity and interest to all present. Handel's Dettingen Te Deum was the principal item of the programme; and it is also an interesting fact, recorded in Mr. Cradock's Memoirs, that the Old Hundreth hymn-tune was sung for the first time on this occasion with full accompaniment, and was "greatly admired" by the congregation. He also tells us that after the Coronation Anthem had been performed at the close of a fine sermon by Archdeacon Burnaby a pause ensued, it being evidently the wish of those present that the anthem should be repeated. Upon this, Mr. Cradock relates that he "ventured to open the doors fully to all the surrounding multitude, who followed me in the most orderly manner, and arranged themselves around the aisles with the greatest decorum, and this animated chorus was then repeated, and closed the whole, with general satisfaction." The large and distinguished company

filed out of the church, at the doors of which collecting-plates were held by the Countess of Denbigh and the Earl and Countess of Harborough. They then adjourned to the Town Hall close by to partake of a choice luncheon, consisting largely of game and fruit contributed by the county guests.

In the evening the streets leading to the Castle were busy with sedan-chairs carrying thither the *élite* of the company

TURRET GATEWAY LEADING TO THE CASTLE. 1897.

for the grand concert with which the day's proceedings were to close. Its fine old Hall presented a striking appearance when filled by ladies with their many-coloured brocades, fans, and powder; while the general effect was much enhanced by the richly-coloured suits, flowing wigs, and lace ruffles of the gentlemen.

The celebrated violinist Giardini, as in the morning performance, led the band and afterwards played a Concerto, in which he delighted the audience by the breadth and richness of his tone. Mr. Gardiner recalls his fine appearance in green coat trimmed with gold lace and large gold buttons, which particularly fascinated the little four-year-old connoisseur. The principal feature of the performance was an Ode to Charity, written for the occasion by Mr. Cradock and finely set to music by Dr. Boyce, the well-known composer,—a powerful effect being produced upon the audience by its sympathetic adaptation to the objects and blessings of the new Infirmary.

This was the last occasion upon which a festive gathering of importance was held at the Castle of Leicester; and it is significant that its ancient Hall, which had so often resounded with the coarse mirth of Baron and Jester, should finally take a part in the onward march of humanity and refinement, by thus assisting in the inauguration of a new era of philanthropic work and endeavour among the inhabitants of both town and county. The Festival of 1774 was not, however, concluded until the following morning, when the performance, for the first time in public, of Handel's new oratorio of "Jephtha" at St. Martin's Church by all the talent collected in the town, brought this remarkable and long remembered event to a close. The proceeds amounted to above £800.

The composer Handel at Gopsall.

It is interesting to be able to connect with our county the works and presence of the great composer Handel. His friend and patron Mr. Jennings, had recently built Gopsall Hall, near Ashby; and he it was who selected and adapted the words of the "Messiah," which Handel mainly wrote while staying there. The oratorio of "Jephtha" may also possibly

have been composed at Gopsall, for Mr. Gardiner recalls being told by Mr. Cradock that he was invited to the Hall to be present when it was tried over for the first time, on which occasion the principal airs were sung, probably at sight, by the musical clergymen of the neighbourhood. In the year 1792 when Mr. Gardiner was on a visit to Lord Howe, by that time the owner of Gopsall, he learnt from the old gardener on the estate that he well remembered the "great musical gentleman" who used to come there every year in his big and lumbering coach drawn by four long-tailed black horses. A fine full length portrait of the composer was included among the collection of pictures at the Hall.

CHAPTER XVIII.

IN addition to the events just related, the year 1774 claims importance in the annals of Leicester from the demolition of the ancient town Gates, a necessity which, while it strikes in us a note of regret for the vanished barriers, unquestionably marks an era in the onward progress and development of the Borough. It was, in fact, fully time that the low-arched, inconvenient entrances should be removed, for the walls themselves had been for years in ruins, and in many parts had probably completely disappeared. Their line was now allowed to be built over, and the venerable gates were sold by auction at the Three Crowns Hotel, in four lots, to be taken away at the buyers' expense. The gateways had been solid, square-looking erections, and though smaller, were probably in form not unlike the Magazine Gateway into the Newarke. The lowness of their arches prevented the passage of loaded waggons; hence the Hay Market, as already mentioned, had always been held outside the gates; while the corn brought to Leicester had been sold from time immemorable on or near that portion of the town wall on the east or south side of the Market Place, known as the Cornwall.*

The disappearance of the Town Gates, 1774.

* In an existing print of the Market Place taken in the middle of the eighteenth century, a row of houses, as at present, stands along the east side, while the space in front of them is named the Corn Market, but without showing any raised platform or banked-up wall.

At this period, and for many years afterwards, Church Gate was literally the town ditch and ancient fosse; and it is said that from the sidewalks a person might have jumped over a waggon passing along the hollow centre roadway. The houses standing on each side were mostly of lath and plaster, with more or less tumble-down gables, which gave the street a picturesque, if not a prosperous, aspect.

The High Cross rebuilt, 1773.

Even yet, the busiest thoroughfare of the town was the High Cross Street; but the elegant old Elizabethan High Cross was gone, having been taken down in 1769 in order to widen the street, which barely allowed for the passage of a single vehicle on either side of the structure. During the year 1773, one of the columns which had supported its arched roof was erected on the old spot, with a small iron cross on its top and steps at its base, forming the High Cross which stood there within the recollection of many persons still living. The remains of the Elizabethan Cross were now distributed about the town in a curious manner. Some of its columns were set up to support a portico in front of the Three Crowns Hotel, while a number of its superfluous lower slabs were used to form the steps round the base of the Roman Milestone just then removed from near Thurmaston and placed in the widest part of the Belgrave Gate, where it became the centre of an experimental market for the sale of butter, vegetables and poultry, on Tuesdays and Thursdays. This site had been occupied by a row of wretched tenements, known as the "Cock-muck-Hill Houses" previously referred to,* the demolition of which the well-to-do residents of that quarter had subscribed to procure, as they were a nuisance to the neighbourhood. The Market venture appears to have been unsuccessful.

* See note, p, 75.

To trace the history of the Leicester High Cross to its close, it may here be stated that the single column was finally removed by the new Corporation about the year 1836, as the increased street traffic rendered the obstruction dangerous. It was then bought by Mr. James Rawson and placed in its

THE LAST HIGH CROSS IN LEICESTER.

present position upon the lawn in front of the Crescent in King Street, where we may hope it will long be preserved as a town relic. The site of the old High Cross,—the central point of Leicester throughout the whole course of her history, —has wisely been marked in the pavement of the roadway

in High Cross Street, by a circle of stones intersected by a Cross.

Features of the town at this period.

Opposite the old Town Gaol, which stood behind St. John's Hospital at the junction of Causeway Lane with High Cross Street, were to be seen at this time two fine elm trees which stretched their leafy boughs across the thoroughfare; and near the Blue Boar Inn was a remarkably fine old holly-tree, whose evergreen top rose high above the surrounding gables. Below the Confrater's House belonging to Wigston's Hospital, and which was situated where now stands the Wyggeston Boys' School, was a row of massive chestnuts; and in many of the large walled gardens belonging to the best houses in the town were fine old mulberry trees planted in the days of James I., when a systematic attempt had been made by the Government to introduce the cultivation of the silk-worm into England.

The houses in Leicester at the end of the eighteenth century were mostly gabled, with projecting, small-paned, bow-windows; and the streets were wretchedly paved with large round stones, while a gutter ran down the middle of the roadway. The coaches rattled and bumped over these stones in a manner calculated to shake the stoutest nerves in the present days of easy locomotion. Foot-ways were not provided until after the year 1791, when they first appeared in one portion of Southgate Street.

On the western side of the town an interesting relic of mediæval times, and one which was still in existence in the early part of the nineteenth century, was the ancient footway then called the "Little Bow Bridge," which had led from the walls of the Augustinian Priory to the Convent well and burial-ground across the river, and over which the Friars

The two Bow Bridges.

had been wont to pass for their daily supply of water. This was probably the original so-called Bow Bridge, from its single high and wide-spanned arch. At the end of the eighteenth century a fine old hawthorn-tree grew upon it, whose branches hung above the stream; and beyond it were to be seen the pleasantly wooded pastures of the ancient Danet's Hall estate, with its residence rebuilt early in the eighteenth century by Mr. John Watts, then its owner. A

THE "BOW BRIDGE" OF THE AUGUSTINE PRIORY.

grandson or great nephew, Dr. Watts of Medbourne, was the honoured promoter of the Leicester Infirmary, as already mentioned. Danet's Hall was connected with the town by a narrow leafy road known for long afterwards as "Watts's Causeway," probably the Roman road to Leicester from the West. Close to the town this road terminated in the historical Bow Bridge,—a fairly wide structure for general traffic lying rather to the north of the "little Bow Bridge"

before mentioned,—and over which King Richard's army had passed on its march to Bosworth Field; its foundations, or site at least, probably dating from Roman days. This was superseded in 1862 by the present iron bridge, but the neighbouring little Priory Bridge had then long since vanished.

The Horse-waters and Pinfolds outside the town.

In the Braunstone Gate was a pinfold for stray cattle and horses, now enclosed behind a wall; and not far from the junction of the Narborough and Hinckley roads was a horse-water, which was in use until quite recent years. Most of the entrances to the town were thus provided. On the southern side, the "Horsepool" occupied the spot where the present Carlton Street joins Oxford Street, at that time called Horsepool Street. At a short distance south was a pinfold, which still exists as a small enclosed space nearly opposite to the Infirmary, but is now quite devoid of any lingering rural feature.

The Butchers' Sheds and The Shambles.

Previous to the nineteenth century the Market Place was not an entirely open space, as now, but contained several rows of small erections in daily use as shops, whose fronts were simply unglazed openings, with a shutter contrived to fall down like a board or shelf, upon which were displayed the wares for sale. The butchers occupied the north side of the Market Place, as their Saturday stalls still continue to do; and their row of sheds extended from the White Lion to the Conduit. The ancient mediæval laws had compelled all butchers to sell their meat in a public structure erected for the purpose, and at the beginning of the eighteenth century this had stood in the present St. Nicholas Street, which was then called "The Shambles," and afterwards, Shambles Lane. This erection was taken down and rebuilt in 1726; but long before the end of the eighteenth century, the

butchers' stalls had been removed to the Market Place; and in the year 1785 their former quarters in Shambles Lane were converted into school premises for five-and-thirty boys, through one of the charitable bequests of Alderman Gabriel Newton.

SHAMBLES LANE,
NOW ST. NICHOLAS STREET. 1830.

This generous-minded though somewhat eccentric man, who is recognised as one of the large benefactors of the town, and whose figure in stone now occupies one of the corners at the base of the Memorial Clock Tower, in company with Simon de Montfort, William Wigston and Sir Thomas White, was at one time the respected host of the Horse and Trumpet, a noted hostelry standing close to the High Cross. In this capacity he made a large income, and early retired from business,—serving as Mayor in the year 1736. Having but few family claims, and being an ardent churchman, he resolved to enrich this and other towns by charitable gifts for the purposes of education, accom-

Alderman Gabriel Newton. Died 1762.

panied with certain conditions dictated by a conscientious reverence for the formalities of religious worship. He attended divine service daily, and was extremely vigilant in detecting and condemning any laxity in the observance of the ritual on the part of the officiating clergyman, or in any of the duties of his subordinates. He died in 1762, and his funeral at All Saints' Church was attended by the Mayor and Corporation, with their insignia and with much ceremonious respect.

THE TOWER ARCH IN ALL SAINTS' CHURCH.

This Church, though at no time called upon to take a prominent part in

ALL SAINTS' CHURCH. 1884.

the town's history, is nevertheless a very interesting monument of the past, standing, as it does, in what until the last three centuries or thereabouts, was the principal street of Leicester. It is the sole survivor of the three ancient churches of that district, having absorbed the parish of St. Peter in the sixteenth century, as that church had absorbed the parish of St. Michael about a hundred years earlier. The projecting tower of All Saints is unique among Leicester churches, and its seventeenth-century clock with the quaint little Jacobean figures which strike the hour has amused and interested the passers by for many generations. This clock was originally placed above the Norman west doorway facing the street, but since its renovation in 1900 after a period of disuse it occupies a position above the south entrance.

By the terms of his will thirty-five scholars at "Alderman Newton's," or as it was more usually called, the "Green Coat" School in Shambles Lane, were clothed and educated. Particular emphasis was laid upon their competent instruction in "toning and psalmody," and the church choirs of the town have ever since been largely recruited from this source. The original uniform of the boys consisted of a bright green coat with scarlet facings and brass buttons, leather breeches and grey worsted stockings*, and a round black cap with red button. In 1809 the school was rebuilt, and the number of scholars increased to eighty. At the present time it occupies an elegant modern building in "St. Martin's," and is under the charge of a representative Board of Governors, in accordance with a Scheme suggested by the Charity Commissioners. It is probable that both Alderman Newton's and the Wyggeston

* Afterwards replaced by drab-coloured trousers.

Schools will be transferred at no distant date to the charge of the Municipal Education Authority, a new Scheme being now under consideration, by which, if adopted, not only the elementary but the secondary education of the town will come under its administration.

Dress of the Period.

The fabrics used for clothing by the middle and lower classes at the end of the eighteenth century were chiefly linsey-woolsey, and what was called "tammy cloth." Mr. Gardiner tells us that when the farmers sold their wool, they reserved the black fleeces for their womenkind to spin at home. Some threads of linen were added, and the result when woven was a mixed fabric called "linsey-woolsey." This was worn by the farmers and country people, and gave a curious "grisly appearance" to an assemblage in the town at a Fair or Market. Coarse home-spun linens were at stated times sold in the open street between the High Cross and the South Gate, in what Mr. Gardiner describes as the "White Apron Fair," when rows of country-women seated on chairs displayed their store of linen for purchase by the poorer classes. So few, he reminds us, were the varieties of cloth then made, that the gentry were distinguished only by the elaborate trimming of their coats and hats with gold lace, and by wearing lace ruffles after the French fashion. Three-cornered hats were worn by men and boys of all ages and degrees. The waistcoat flaps of the men reached nearly as low as the knee; and the coat sleeves were short and wide, with an enormous cuff. Knee-breeches and buckles were universal, and stockings of silk or worsted, often ornamented with scarlet "clocks" for the wear of the upper classes, completed the costume of the men. Wigs were also much used; but late in the century it was customary to wear the natural

hair grown long, or, if cut short, generally dressed with powder. The ladies' hair was combed over high pads, with sometimes a small cap perched on the top. They always wore high heels, and powder on dress occasions. Large and spreading hoops were very general; and Throsby, writing in 1791, mentions the fact of a lady being blown into the town ditch from St. Margaret's causeway during a gale of wind, from the adoption of this preposterous fashion, which was revived for a time during the middle of the nineteenth century. He relates that on another occasion a lady was rescued by two men just as she was sailing over the parapet of the West Bridge into the river beneath, a statement which, like some others by this historian, is probably somewhat highly coloured. It may be mentioned in passing, that umbrellas were not introduced into Leicester until about the first year of the nineteenth century, when the two ladies who first ventured into the streets on a wet day thus protected from the rain found it advisable to keep close together for mutual encouragement against the curiosity and remarks which their appearance excited.

The introduction of the Stocking Frame.

The Stocking-frame, originally the invention of a Nottinghamshire clergyman named Lee, in the reign of Queen Elizabeth, was introduced into our town about 1670 by one Nicholas Allsopp who, on account of the jealousy which watched any attempt to supersede the simplest forms of hand labour, worked it secretly for some years in a cellar in North-gate Street. In the course of time, however, the method was openly practised, and machines quickly began to multiply. By the beginning of the eighteenth century the weaving of framework stockings had begun to assume the importance of a regular trade; and in 1727 it was computed that there

were as many as five or six hundred framework-knitters in Leicester. The trade was not without its troubles, however. The stocking weavers complained of the lowness of their wages; and in 1773 a more serious calamity appeared to threaten them in the invention of an improved machine which, it was reported, would so minimise their labour as to throw most of them out of employment. When it became known that one of these machines had been purchased by a hosiery firm in this town, great excitement and anger was manifested by the stockingers. To prove to them that their fears were exaggerated, the offending firm announced that they would exhibit the machine within the Exchange in the Market Place for the free inspection of all the workmen in the town. Such, however, was the blind and impatient fury of the mob which thereupon gathered from all quarters that, before the parts were adjusted, they burst into the Exchange and dragged the machine into the Market Place, where they broke it to pieces, and carried the fragments in triumph through the streets. The hosiers appear to have been so much intimidated by these proceedings that they promised the rioters not to promote the introduction of any machine which would reduce the usual number of workmen. This satisfied them, and tranquility was again restored. Improvements however, were gradually carried out, and by the end of the eighteenth century three thousand stocking-frames were employed in the homes of the artisans of Leicester,—and their peculiar and unmusical screech might be heard in every street in the poorer quarters of the town. The wives and daughters worked at their spinning-wheels; but in summer time both frames and wheels were deserted while the families went out to earn money in the hay or harvest

field ; so that they were never without work or wages, however small. Speaking as a former manufacturer Mr. Gardiner recalls that for the first month after harvest the work of the stockingers was invariably rougher and less well finished because of the hardening of their hands from the out-door employment.

The development of the trade into the department called "Fancy hosiery" did not take place until the beginning of the nineteenth century, when it was introduced by Mr. William Kelly, sen. This branch was afterwards greatly extended by Mr. Richard Harris the elder, who though of humble origin, rose to be Member of Parliament for this borough. Later on it was still further developed by his sons John and Richard, large manufacturers, the first-named also twice elected to represent the borough of Leicester in Parliament.

During the eighteenth century the Free Grammar School was still the principal place of education in the town. It therefore contained pupils of every social class, and Mr. Gardiner relates that his father well remembered the time when the young Earl of Stamford and his brother the Hon. Booth Grey came in from Steward's Hay regularly every morning to attend the Upper School. He also recalls the pleasant custom then existing, of the daily appearance in the porch at 7 a.m. of the baker, with a basket of hot buns for the boys of the Lower School. There were at this time about thirty boarders besides the day scholars. The Masters were appointed and paid by the Corporation ; and at stated periods, Greek and Latin speeches were delivered before the town authorities at the High Cross. Once a year a supper, called the "Potation," was held for the lower Masters, who invited their friends, and all partook liberally of punch and

Free Grammar School.

ale. The Grammar School continued in existence until after the New Corporation took office in 1836, at which time the Head Master was in receipt of a salary of £75 18s. 6d., exclusive of charitable bequests amounting to about £40. He also occupied rent free, as in earlier days, an adjoining house, the property of the Corporation.

Modes of transit and travel.

At the period with which we are now occupied but few carts, waggons, or wheeled vehicles of any description were to be seen in the streets of Leicester. The bakers delivered their bread from panniers slung on the backs of horses; and milk was carried in a bucket on the heads of women,—this method being afterwards superseded by the milk-man with his yoke and pails. Goods of all kinds were still generally carried through the country by strings of pack-horses, the leader being decorated with bells. Great confusion and delay often attended this mode of transit, for on the narrow tracks in the less frequented districts there was not room for two strings of horses to pass; and quarrelling among the drivers, usually settled by blows, was the result. "Pack waggons" were sometimes employed on the high roads, and were still more frequently used as the century drew near its close. Horse riding was much in vogue, and a "double-horse" carrying a lady's pillion behind the saddle was a favourite mode of travel for the wives of farmers and country squires accompanying their husbands into the town on market days. For their accommodation horse blocks for mounting were provided in many of the streets and Inn yards. Very little garden produce was brought into market; and the mode of living among the higher classes was simple and economical except on great occasions, and then hard drinking and conviviality ruled the hour. "Although meat," Mr. Gardiner

tells us, "was not more than 2d. or 3d. a pound, and wheaten bread three farthings, few of the lower order tasted either, barley bread being the common food of the people. At this time the fields were more open, and the corn lands extended as far as the eye could reach: on the Common the cottager kept his pigs and poultry."

Poor living of the lower classes.

The population of Leicester which, at the beginning of the eighteenth century had numbered only about 5000, had by this time risen to upwards of 14,000.

In the latter part of the eighteenth century dancing was a favourite amusement among the upper classes, as many as twelve large "Assemblies" in the year being occasionally devoted to it in Leicester. Public concerts frequently terminated in a Ball. In 1774 was advertised Mr. Frudd's Ball, to begin at 4-30,—"as soon as tea was over in the afternoon," says Mr. Gardiner. Mr. Frudd was a well-known local dancing master, and it was announced that the new "Minuet de la Cour" would be danced on the occasion. After this, the Leicester Balls generally commenced with Minuets, three or four of which would be gone through before the party broke off into Country Dances which in course of time were superseded by the "Quadrille."

Amusements in Leicester in 1774.

The favourite place of fashionable out-door amusement at this time was the Bath Gardens or Vauxhall, situated near the West Bridge, and extending along the river side of the present Bath Lane. At that period, no doubt, this was as pretty a spot as any that existed in Leicester, with the rising ground anciently occupied by the Roman town in the rear, over which rose the quaint tower and spire of St. Nicholas' Church,*—the Castle, Mount, and St. Mary's Church forming

The Bath Gardens or Vauxhall.

* The Spire, which was of uncertain date, was taken down about 1809, owing to its unsafe condition, and was never replaced.

pleasant features not far distant,—while beyond the river on the western side lay the finely-wooded grounds of Westcotes and Danet's Hall, and the sloping fields stretching away in the direction of Glenfield and Kirby Muxloe. These public gardens were a great feature in the social life of the town. Mr. Gardiner relates that, as a little child, the annual summer treat at the Dame-school which he attended in High Street, in premises for a long period occupied by Mr. Payne, fishmonger, was a "tea drinking" at the Bath Gardens, when the little procession of children,—the girls dressed in white, with a pink sash and red morocco shoes, and the boys with curled and powdered heads,—

"PAYNE'S," HIGH STREET.

walked thither hand in hand, without hats or caps, to the admiration of the people who lingered in the quiet streets to watch them as they passed.

In the summer of 1774 the officers of the Militia then in training in the town entertained the chief residents at a "tea

ST. NICHOLAS' CHURCH. 1906.

party" in the Bath Gardens, when the band of the regiment, stationed in a pleasure boat upon the river, discoursed sweet music with charming effect; and the ladies, in their powder and patches, hoops and stiff brocades, danced or promenaded with the gentlemen, who were equally fine in embroidered waistcoats, gold lace, wigs, and ruffles. After dark the gardens were illuminated, and the gay scene was prolonged until a late hour. The entertainment, indeed, proved so enjoyable that on the next evening but one the compliment was returned,—the residents providing a similar fête in honour of the Militia Officers. In 1777 Mr. Astley and his riders appeared in the "New Theatre" in these gardens, and astonished the townspeople by their wonderful equestrian feats.

French prisoners in Leicester during the American War.

During the American War of Independence many French and Dutch prisoners were sent on parole to Leicester. Most of them were officers, men of culture and refinement, whose polished manners and, in many cases, great musical ability, made them the welcome guests of the best families. In accordance with their national custom, Sunday afternoons were regarded as their chief time of recreation; and they usually assembled in what was called "Phipp's Field,"—a portion of the South Fields rented by the Alderman of that name, and amused themselves with various active sports and exercises, greatly to the diversion of the townspeople who gathered in crowds to watch them. Successive detachments of these French prisoners appear to have been detained in Leicester during several years about this period.

Brick-making in Leicester early in the century.

About the year 1700 large fields of clay had been discovered near the town, under the surface of a portion of the fields lying somewhat south of the present Welford Place. This had led to the making of bricks by persons to whom the

Corporation let the ground, and to their gradual adoption for building purposes. The Great Meeting Chapel, erected in 1708, was the first brick building of any importance in Leicester. The congregation meeting in this place also claims to have been the first to establish a Sunday School in this town, during the year 1783. This was three years previous to the date usually assigned to their formation in Leicester when, a combined undertaking by Churchmen and Dissenters having been carefully organised, eleven Sunday schools in different parts of the town were opened on the same day, July 26th, 1786.

The Great Meeting Sunday Schools established 1783.

The winter of the year 1783 was a particularly severe one, and was long remembered in Leicester, both on account of its hardships on the one hand, and of its seasonable diversions on the other. On one occasion a gay masquerade of skaters took place upon the river between the West Bridge and the Vauxhall Gardens, when several thousands of people assembled on the banks to witness the novel and lively spectacle. Skating had been introduced into Leicester by the foreign prisoners of war lately mentioned; and the pastime was quickly taken up and spread among the residents.

The Skating Masquerade.

It should be mentioned that, in this year, the spire of St. Mary's Church was destroyed by lightning, and was replaced by the beautiful slender erection which is still so great an ornament to our town. The old spire, which probably dated from the time when the broad south aisle was added to the church, had been injured several times before from the same cause.

The old Spire of St. Mary's destroyed the same year.

The year 1785 witnessed the carrying out of a great local improvement in the formation of the New Walk, or, as it was at first called, the Queen's Walk, as a promenade for the

The formation of the New Walk, 1785.

ST. MARY'S CHURCH AND LEICESTER CASTLE. 1900.

recreation of the inhabitants. This was resolved upon at a Common Hall; and directions were issued to level and prepare a wide alley of ten yards, to be planted with elm and other trees, and to extend across the Corporation Fields from the north corner of St. Mary's Field, (where the "Walk" now terminates in Welford Place,) up the gently-rising ground, as far as the gate opening into the "turnpike leading for London," a distance of about three quarters of a mile. This was a great boon to the residents; and it is interesting to students of the ancient history of Leicester to know that the Walk was formed along the line of the old Roman road known as the Via Devana, which after traversing the country from Stretton and Stoughton entered Leicester at the South Gate of the Romans (now usually located at or near the short Wycliffe Street). This link with the remote Past draws the old and the new together in a striking manner.

It is also pleasant to record that the generous-minded Mr. Cradock of Gumley helped the movement forward by a gift of ornamental trees, and by sending his "servant" to assist in planting them and in the general work of laying out the new Walk. This was acknowledged by a grateful vote of thanks passed shortly afterwards at a meeting of the gentlemen of the town.

CHAPTER XIX.

THE rise of the trade of worsted-spinning in Leicester must now be briefly traced. Before the year 1785 all the worsted for the hosiery manufacture had been spun by the hands of workmen, as well as by numbers of country women, and also by domestic servants in the town, whose spare time, as Mr. Thompson informs us, was often thus profitably filled up by their employers. In 1785 one Mr. Joseph Brookhouse, living in Church Gate, invented a machine for spinning worsted; and enlisting the interest of Mr. Joseph Whetstone, a large spinner then employing some 1500 persons in hand work, and of Mr. John Coltman,* a hosiery manufacturer,—both influential men with capital,—the three joined in the enterprise of introducing these

The Worsted Manufacture in Leicester.

* This Mr. John Coltman must not be mistaken for a distant relative of the same name who was at this time living in the house in the Newarke afterwards occupied for many years by the family of the late Mr. E. Shipley Ellis, and standing upon the site of the ancient Collegiate Church. Early in the eighteenth century this house had been the residence of Mr. Lawrence Carter, Recorder of Leicester for thirty years, and who in 1727 was appointed a Baron of the Court of Exchequer. For long afterwards it was spoken of as "Baron Carter's House." Mr. Coltman, from whom on the mother's side the much-respected Franklin family is descended was, like his relative in Shambles Lane, a man of much culture, and highly respected by his fellow-citizens. He made additions to the house on the south side, where the inscription "J. C." may still be seen.

machines. The invention however, got wind, and at once the hand-spinners leagued themselves against it in the most determined manner. Both Mr. Whetstone and Mr. Coltman were openly threatened with death and destruction of property. It was decided to make an organised attack upon the dwelling of the former in North-gate Street,—an old Elizabethan house with gables and a projecting upper story; and an equally organised defence was arranged by Mr. Whetstone and his friends who, aware of the mischief brewing, had provided themselves with fowling pieces and ammunition, and having sent away the ladies and children of the family, assembled in the upper storey and awaited the arrival of the malcontents. Late at night on that Saturday the 1st December 1785, a partially drunken mob with a few torches and many missiles appeared before the house, and with great uproar assailed it with volleys of stones, breaking all the windows and threatening further mischief. Shots were fired from the house; but fearing to wound the inoffensive spectators who accompanied the mob, Mr. Whetstone's party soon ceased to defend themselves in this manner. The rioters now easily gained possession of the lower storey, in the recessed front of which several of the ringleaders had hitherto gathered and screened themselves from the shots; and having destroyed all the furniture, they made preparations for attacking Mr. Whetstone in the upper room. The situation was now so threatening that he was persuaded to let himself down by a rope from a back window; and being unobserved, he obtained a horse at a little distance, and rode away from the town. We do not learn whether the rest of the party followed his example, but the riot continued for two hours, at the end of which time the Mayor, Mr. Dickenson, with the Town

Rioting among the hand-spinners.

Servants and a few constables arrived upon the scene. Failing in his attempt to disperse the mob, who began to hustle and threaten him, the Mayor proceeded to read the Riot Act, when he was struck on the head by a stone, from the effects of which he died a few months afterwards. The rioters having done all the damage they could to Mr. Whetstone's premises then proceeded to Mr. Coltman's house in Shambles Lane, where they broke the windows and did other injury; and being in an altogether mischievous mood, they also made the round of several other houses belonging to friends of Mr. Whetstone, and inflicted similar damage. Within the next day or two, hearing that a spinning-machine existed at Market Harborough, the mob reassembled and marched thither, where they sought out the machine, and burnt it in the Market Place; and a detachment also set out to Melton, where it had been reported that another was to be found. These long journeys on foot prove the determined resistance offered to the introduction of spinning-machinery by those who were too short-sighted to foresee the rapid spread of the trade, and consequent need of more workmen for it. Their resistance delayed this advantage to Leicester for more than twenty years. The spinning trade here remained small and antiquated, while the manufacture of worsted by machinery was carried on with increasing profit in large factories at Warwick, Bromsgrove, Bristol, Kettering, and other places, whence large quantities of yarn had to be purchased for weaving into stockings by the Leicester hosiers, whose business in the meantime steadily increased. It was not until the beginning of the nineteenth century that the attitude of the workmen in Leicester gave promise of justifying the revival of the spinning trade under the new conditions.

Certain firms then however, made the attempt without opposition, and they and their successors gradually won for the town the high position it has now long held in the manufacture of worsted.

The "Revolution Club."

In 1782, a Club had been formed in Leicester for the cultivation of the principles of political progress and parliamentary reform. This received the name of the "Revolution Club," in recognition of the benefits secured to the English people by King William III., "who preserved the liberties of this country, and secured a free Constitution to every Briton." For some years the Club was well supported by prominent and influential men of both town and county who, in addition to their regular meetings annually assembled to dine together in Leicester, on which occasions their number sometimes reached 500 or 600. The discredit thrown upon the Revolutionary cause, however, by the French Anarchists after the year 1789 produced a reaction among the party of progress on this side the Channel. Public feeling in England became strongly Conservative,—the members of the Leicester "Revolution Club" began to fall off,—and after the terrible doings in Paris in 1792, the horror felt by all reasonable men towards the violence of the French Republic and the cruelty of its mob, caused the Club to melt away altogether. After this year it never met again.

A Riotous Election in 1790.

In 1790, a strongly contested Parliamentary Election was held in the Borough, and local party-spirit running very high at the time, great disorder and mischief resulted. For nearly three weeks after the nomination of the four candidates drunkenness, bribery, and general lawlessness prevailed. After many party fights and the expenditure of thousands of pounds, the contending factions wisely decided to com-

promise the matter by each withdrawing a candidate, and leaving the other two in undisputed possession of the field. The sudden termination thus put to the licence in which the mob had been indulging,—a faint reflection, possibly, of the lurid light now cast around on the nations of Europe by the Revolution in Paris,—so exasperated them that they threatened to burn down the town. They paraded the streets in riotous crowds, broke into the Exchange, where they took possession of the Corporation books and papers, throwing them down to be torn and trampled by the crowd beneath,—attacked the Assembly Rooms on the Coal Hill, where the Committee hurriedly concealed themselves in the roof of the building, and, laying hands on all the music books and instruments they could find, flung them in torn scraps and fragments from the windows. Their worst threats were not carried out, however; and they appear to have satisfied themselves by terrifying the town with their violent behaviour and wanton destruction of property. The pavement of the Market Place and East Gates was strewn with torn papers, many of great value; and the musical library at the Assembly Rooms was completely destroyed, with the exception of a single book of symphonies thrown by chance into the horse-panniers of a peaceable baker who found himself surrounded by the turbulent crowd, and who faithfully returned the volume soon afterwards.

Town Constables and Watchmen.

It may here be mentioned that, until the existence of the Reformed Corporation in 1836, policemen were unknown in Leicester; a thief or disorderly person usually being handed over to the charge of one of the very few town constables who kept him under lock and key until he could be brought before the magistrates. In the night time these officials were

relieved by two or three watchmen who patrolled the streets in long-caped cloaks, with thick sticks and lanterns, and with their monotonous cry of the hour and weather.

The Old Borough Gaol pulled down.

Mention has been made of the old Borough Gaol which, built at an unknown date, was in the eighteenth century still standing close to the angle of Causeway Lane and High Cross Street. Now obsolete and inadequate for its purpose, this building was taken down in 1792, with the interesting discovery among its foundations of portions of the ancient Chapel of the Hospital of St. John, over which it had been built. Among these remains a finely-preserved stone arch of early Norman work came to light, which was afterwards removed to the private grounds of a resident. It will be remembered that after the Reformation, the adjoining disused Hospital was granted by Queen Elizabeth to the Corporation for conversion into a Wool Hall; but failing to fulfil its expectations, the building soon reverted to something like its original purpose, by being made into an almshouse for the recipients of St. John's, and afterwards also of Mr. Bent's charities, and was usually called "Bent's Hospital." This old building remained until the year 1860, when it was pulled down and replaced by a smaller and more comfortable shelter for the aged inmates.

The philanthropist John Howard in Leicester.

About the year 1787 the philanthropist John Howard had visited Leicester and inspected the Gaol and Infirmary. He found much to censure in both institutions; and it probably was partly owing to his severe strictures upon its condition that the former was afterwards condemned as unworthy of alteration, and a new Gaol built. The defects at the Infirmary, which were connected with ventilation, drainage, and general management, were speedily remedied. Mr. Howard also visited

The Town and County Bridewells.

the town and county Bridewells, or Houses of Correction for convicted prisoners, who at that time were usually confined in separate buildings from those awaiting sentence. The town Bridewell was in Causeway Lane, adjoining the old Borough Gaol; and that for the county lay in Blue Boar Lane. In the early part of the nineteenth century, a new county Bridewell was erected in what we now call Infirmary Square, but this was taken down prior to 1850; and the end of Jarrom Street now occupies a portion of its site.

Borough and County Gaols erected 1792.

In the year 1792, two new Gaols were built in High Cross Street; that for the borough prisoners once more covering the site of the old Hospital Chapel; while near the High Cross was erected for the use of the county, the large stone-faced Prison which existed until quite recent years, and which was constructed upon the general plan recommended by Mr. Howard. In 1828, however, the New county Gaol was opened on the Welford Road, then quite a recently-formed thoroughfare; and upon the removal thither of the county prisoners from High Cross Street, those of the borough were transferred to their more roomy quarters, and the small Borough Gaol was left empty. This was pulled down about 1837 by order of the New Corporation, and small houses built on its site; while the larger building remained the abode of the borough prisoners until the Welford Road Gaol was converted into a Government Prison, about the year 1880; and this has since been used for the reception of both town and county delinquents and Government convicts.

Treatment and punishment of prisoners.

The treatment of prisoners, and criminal punishments generally at this period were far harsher and more brutalising than those now in use. Irons were usually worn; and old residents can recall the dismal clanking of chains as

HIGH CROSS STREET.

Shewing the High Cross, Gaol, and Grammar School, 1830.

the prisoners, surrounded by the rabble, were marched through the street at Assize times for trial at the Town Hall or Castle. Hanging was frequently the penalty for quite trivial offences; and a not uncommon form of punishment for certain misdemeanours was a public flogging, when the victim, tied down by the wrists inside a cart, and his back stripped to the skin, was drawn round the Market Place, writhing in agony while the executioner who accompanied him plied his office with a heavy cat-o'-nine-tails; a brutal and degrading sight for the spectators, and not helpful, though possibly in some degree deterrent, to the coarse or feeble natures out of which criminals are made.

Soon after the Infirmary was erected in 1771, a small wing was added for the reception of insane patients whose friends were not in a position to place them in one of the private Lunatic Asylums in the Town. The best known of the latter was that under the charge of Dr. Arnold, one of the chief physicians then practising in Leicester. This was situated in West Bond Street, and was provided with an underground passage across the narrow street, by which the patients could reach the walled garden opposite, within which they took their exercise. Dr. Arnold was much respected and beloved in the town, and was held in high reputation for his skilful treatment of the insane. At a somewhat later period the celebrated Baptist preacher Robert Hall was more than once under his care in Bond Street, and also of that of another authority in mental diseases, Dr. Hill, who conducted an Asylum in Belgrave Gate. Insane patients belonging to the poorer classes continued to be lodged at the Infirmary, until removed to the County Lunatic Asylum on the Knighton

Asylums for the Insane.

Hill, which was opened in 1836. The Borough Asylum was not built until 1869.

The Leicester Canal opened. 1794.

We must now pass on to mention a local development which was of immense value in its day, though now for many years thrown into the background by the wonderful multiplication of railways in this country. This was the formation of a Canal in conjunction with the river Soar between Leicester, Loughborough, Melton and other more distant places, and afterwards connected from Leicester with the great Union Canal of the Midland District.

The project had been set on foot in 1791, but communication with the North was not completed until 1794, when the Leicester Canal was informally opened by the arrival of two boats laden with goods from Gainsborough. After unloading at the newly-formed wharves, the barges were filled with cargoes of wool and despatched on their return journey. The great advantage in cheapness of this mode of transmitting heavy natural products and merchandise over the limited and costly methods until then in use, now gave a fresh impetus to the development of trade in Leicester. From this date, indeed, we must picture the northern and western outskirts of the town as rapidly losing their pleasant and almost rural aspect. While the canal and utilized river banks became busy with bargemen and grimy with traffic, the green meadows adjoining were rapidly disfigured with wharves, offices, and sheds, and strewn with the casual litter of such localities. Recreation and waterside enjoyments had now to give place to the more material benefits of commerce; and thus the pleasant old Bath Gardens, with their many festive or tender associations for young and old, were swept away to

make room for the prosaic details of trade,—and in 1797 their trim alleys and smooth-shaven lawns were advertised for sale as a suitable site for more wharves and factories along the line of the new Canal.

The Bath Gardens closed, 1797.

A new Vauxhall was afterwards opened in St. Peter's Lane, including a Bowling Green and large public room, besides smaller pavilions for al fresco entertainment. This however, was but a feeble reproduction of the dignity and importance of the old Garden; and it never rose to more than an inferior place of recreation for the townspeople. It was situated between the present Baptist and Independent Chapels.

A Roman Catholic Chapel erected 1799.

It should be here stated that a Roman Catholic Chapel, the first to exist in Leicester since the Reformation, was erected in or near Causeway Lane, in the same locality, in the year 1799, but all trace of it has now disappeared. The present Church in Wellington Street was built in 1817, and others have since been established.

The County Assembly Rooms, opened in 1800.

A more central and prominent building which arose during the last year of the century, from the plans of Mr. J. Johnson, architect, of London, (but a native of Leicester,) was the present County Assembly Rooms, originally intended also to serve the purpose of a Hotel, and from which Hotel Street was named. It was opened in the autumn of the year 1800 for the celebration of the Race Balls which, a century ago, formed an annual feature of the greatest interest to the inhabitants and to the county families attending the Leicester Races. The building had been promoted mainly by the residents in the county, although it was not actually owned by them until about the year 1825, when a portion was fitted up as lodgings for the Judges at Assize times.

Another noticeable building designed by the same architect

The Consanguinitarium.

had been, seven years earlier, generously endowed by him as a home for his less wealthy kinsfolk in Leicester. This was called the Consanguinitarium, which stood in an enclosure fronting Southgate Street, upon a portion of the land long ago occupied by the Franciscan Friars. Of late years this building has been taken down, and the endowment removed to a new and suitable home upon the Highfields estate, not far from the present St. Peter's Church.

LEICESTER MARKET PLACE IN THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY.

CHAPTER XX.

TOWARDS the close of the eighteenth century, several very notable men were connected with Leicester and its neighbourhood, and of these should first be mentioned Dr. Carey, the noted Baptist missionary, a man of great intellectual power, and a very genius in perseverance, who came to Leicester as a young man in 1789 to fill the pulpit of Harvey Lane Chapel. He had been brought up as a shoemaker, and his stipend being very small, he was permitted to work at his early trade on week-days. Mr. Gardiner relates that he was to be found in his little house opposite the chapel, busily engaged at his trade-bench, though with books and flowers around him,—some of the more cultured and liberal residents having kindly offered him the use of their libraries. An eager taste for literature, combined with love of the ministry, gradually developed in him an ardent desire to become a missionary among the native population of British India; and by his natural linguistic ability and immense perseverance in study he duly qualified himself for this object and successfully carried it out, though at first in the face of the greatest difficulties, and solely upon his own personal responsibility. His labours subsequently gained for him a high position abroad and the well-earned respect,

Dr. Carey, the noted Baptist Missionary.

not only of those associated with him in his wide missionary enterprises, but of the whole literary and scientific world. During a period of sixteen years, he printed the four Gospels in twenty-six different languages, including the Persian and Chinese. Robert Hall wrote of Carey as "that extraordinary man, who from the lowest obscurity and poverty, without assistance, rose by dint of unrelenting industry, to the highest honours of literature; became one of the first Orientalists, the first of Missionaries, and the instrument of diffusing more religious knowledge among his contemporaries than has fallen to the lot of any individual since the Reformation; a man who unites with the most profound and varied attainments the fervour of an evangelist, the piety of a saint, and the simplicity of a child."

Mr. John Coltman.

One of the leading men of the town at this time, and conspicuous for his intellect and ability in almost every direction was Mr. John Coltman, who lived in Shambles Lane, now St. Nicholas' Street, and already mentioned as the friend and host of John Wesley. Though engaged in the hosiery trade, he was a first-rate classical scholar, a connoisseur in the Fine Arts, and an insatiable reader. He was also a noted antiquarian, and his collection of coins, many of which had been dug up in the parish in which he lived, was of great value. He possessed brilliant conversational qualities, but being shy and reserved by nature, mixed little in society, and was seldom to be drawn forth from his quiet home and studious habits, although he was invariably visited by men of note who came to Leicester. Mr. Gardiner recalls a visit paid to Mr. Coltman by Dr. Priestley in 1786, when the latter was staying with Mr. Robert Brewin; and he describes the famous man of science as a "neat little person, dressed as a divine,"

wearing a large curled and powdered wig, with a clerical cocked hat and carrying a gold-headed cane. Mr. Coltman took him to view the Jewry Wall, nearly opposite to his house, and young Gardiner "sneaked behind the philosopher, and heard his opinion that it was the remains of a Roman bath."

The Rev. William Ludlam.

The study of natural science was at this time the delight of several townsmen possessing means and leisure for cultivating their hobby; and foremost among them must be mentioned the Rev. William Ludlam, Senior Fellow of St. John's College, Cambridge, whose all-round ability and constructive genius associated him with many scientific works of the time. The study of music, of astronomy, of mathematics, optics and mechanics; the construction of church organs, on which he was a skilful performer*; the casting and tuning of church bells —all came within the scope of his interest and technical knowledge. Mr. Gardiner relates his visit to the Vauxhall Gardens in company with Mr. Ludlam, then an elderly man, to witness the ascent of the first balloon ever seen in Leicester, and almost the first in England. It was only a small one of about two feet in diameter, and was inflated with gas produced from tubs filled with sulphuric acid and iron filings, the smell of which was so abominable that many of the spectators were driven from the place. As the little balloon arose from the ground amidst the wonder and astonishment of the crowd, and sailed away before a fair northerly breeze, the old man and his young companion watched it with the greatest interest through the telescope

* Mr. Ludlam had superintended the building of Snetzler's organ in St. Martin's Church, and as a recognition of his services, was presented with keys for his own private use of the instrument

which the former with Mr. Dolland was then engaged in perfecting with all the best optical mechanism of the time. To test the power of their improved glass, the constructors paid frequent visits to Bardon Hill, as commanding the most extended views in the neighbourhood.

Mr. Joseph Cradock.

A few words of more particular reference are due to the Mr. Cradock whose name has been so frequently mentioned in connection with the social life of Leicester in the latter part of the eighteenth century. He was born and baptized in this town in 1741, and educated at the Free Grammar School under the influence of the Rev. Gerrard Andrewes, then Head-Master; a man of great culture, and reputed by Mr. Cradock in his Memoirs to be the best reader and elocutionist of his day;—Mr. Garrick alone excepted. Young Cradock grew up with a strong taste for literature and the drama, and if born under other circumstances would probably have adopted the stage as a profession. His father, however, was a man of means and owned property in Leicester and estates at Knighton and Gumley, so that a profession was not deemed necessary. It was not unnatural that upon the removal of a certain amount of parental restraint which followed the early death of his father, Joseph Cradock eagerly seized the opportunity of gratifying his social and artistic tastes by repairing to London and mixing in the best intellectual and dramatic, as well as the most fashionable, circles that Town could afford. He made numberless friends there, and became an excellent amateur actor; moulding his style upon that of David Garrick, who was his intimate friend through life, and whom he greatly resembled in personal appearance. He married early, and varied his life in London by visiting his property at Gumley and building its hand-

some Hall in 1766. Landscape gardening being one of his favourite pursuits, he took great pleasure in improving the beautiful natural features of the estate, and in planting valuable conifers and other trees in the grounds surrounding the house. For several years he threw open his plantations to the public; and in summer time Gumley Hall was the resort of much fashionable company driving over from Leicester and the neighbourhood. A year or two after the Hall was built Mr. Cradock added a small theatre, in which he and his associates indulged their talent for acting, and amused and interested his friends from far and near. Mr. Garrick was frequently a guest.

The literary skill which Mr. Cradock possessed enabled him to write a tragedy called "Lobeide," which was produced at Covent Garden as well as at Leicester and other places, and to which his friend Dr. Oliver Goldsmith wrote a prologue. A complimentary letter from Voltaire, to whom he sent a copy, was afterwards among Mr. Cradock's most highly-prized treasures. Among other short works he wrote an Ode to Charity, which was set to music by Dr. Boyce, and performed at the Leicester Infirmary Anniversary in 1774 and on a later occasion.

As we have seen, Mr. Cradock was a continual patron and contributor to social amusements for the benefit of Leicester and the county; but unfortunately for himself he was no man of business, and throughout his life allowed himself to be drawn into an expenditure unwarranted by his income. After building Gumley Hall he was never free from financial embarrassment, although his hospitalities and kindly actions showed no diminution; and at the age of 82 years, after the disappointment of seeing two expected fortunes pass into the

hands of other members of his family, he took the wise step of handing over his encumbered estate to a friend, and of retiring to much smaller quarters in London, where he lived upon a moderate annuity. He also parted with the splendid library he had accumulated, and occupied the few remaining years of his life in publishing his historical tragedy of "The Czar," and two volumes of "Literary and Miscellaneous Memoirs." In London he enjoyed the almost daily companionship of his friend Mr. John Nichols, the historian of Leicestershire. Mr. Cradock died in 1826.

Mr, Richard Phillips,

A daring spirit, whose wide and enquiring mind wrought good to the town, but at one time much mischief to himself, was Mr. Richard Phillips, a bookseller carrying on business at the corner of Gallowtree and Humberstone Gates. He came to Leicester as a young man, about the year 1780, prepared to teach the higher branches of mathematics, and he soon attracted a number of thoughtful youths around him by forming a Philosophical Society, which was called the "Adelphi." Telescopes, planetariums, and electrical machines engrossed the attention of the young "philosophers," whose interest in natural phenomena was further stimulated by the visit to Leicester about this time of a professional scientist named Booth, who delivered a course of twenty lectures, illustrated with experiments, at the Exchange. Mr. Phillips engaged premises in Bond Street, in which the members of the Philosophical Society met once a week, when the new and fascinating science of electricity appears to have been the subject most frequently discussed. Experiments, not always prudent, were constantly made,—"a high pole in the form of a spear," says Mr. Gardiner, being erected by the Society on the top of the house, wherewith, like Franklin, they essayed to draw

Establishment of Philosophical and Literary Societies, and of the Permanent Library.

the electric fluid from the clouds. A transit of Mercury was also closely observed, probably from the same elevation.

Mr. Phillips was an advanced Radical, and in his shop were to be seen the most revolutionary pamphlets of the day, including those of the notorious Tom Paine. Being a really enlightened and cultivated man, he was active in promoting the study of Literature as well as Science, in Leicester. He it was who originated a Literary Society, in order to make it the centre of a Permanent Library, a most useful and valuable experiment. It dates from 1789. The ultra principles, however, openly professed by Mr. Phillips made him obnoxious to the town authorities, then keenly on the watch to stamp out any attempted reflection of the anarchy in Paris; and in the year 1793 he was brought to trial for selling Paine's "Rights of Man," and sentenced to eighteen months' imprisonment in Leicester Gaol. The pamphlet had also been offered by other booksellers in the town, but Mr. Phillips was the arch-offender, and was accordingly made an example of, by a not very scrupulous exercise of judicial power.* Soon after his release, a fire in a neighbouring house spread to Mr. Phillips' premises, and his whole store of books and printing apparatus, as well as the Permanent Library, was unfortunately destroyed. After this he removed to London, where his talents brought him into contact with eminent literary men, and he became a noted publisher. In 1807, "the persecuted printer of Leicester" was chosen a Sheriff of London, and received the honour of Knighthood from King George III. The Leicester Permanent Library was

* The "Adelphi" Philosophical Society formed by him was also suppressed for the same reason.

afterwards re-formed, and still remains one of our most valued institutions.

Daniel Lambert.

A notice of the local celebrities at this period would be incomplete without some mention of the well-known Daniel Lambert, son of the gaoler of the county Bridewell in Blue Boar Lane, who grew to an abnormal size in girth of body and limbs. At one time his weight was upwards of fifty-five stones. He was sensitive on the subject of his physical peculiarities; and though gentle and amiable in disposition was often moved to anger by the curiosity and openly-expressed wonder of those who happened to see him. From pecuniary necessity he afterwards unwillingly consented to exhibit himself in London and the Provinces, but keenly felt the degradation of the position. He died at Stamford in 1809 at the early age of 36 years, and his chair and walking stick are preserved in a room in the Museum at Leicester.

Much has been said regarding the amusements of the upper classes in Leicester during the period we have been considering; and it now only remains to give a short description of one or two yearly holidays of the people which had survived from older times. The annual Fairs in the town were great occasions both for business and for pleasure; and on the morning of the first day it was customary, as of old, to make a formal Proclamation of the Fair. The Mayor, Corporation, and Town Officials, followed by the Waits, who played as they walked, and by a few of the male inmates of Trinity Hospital decked in the armour which now hangs on their Chapel walls, proceeded along the principal streets to the High Cross, when the ancient Charter of the Fair was read by the Town Clerk. The procession then moved on, halting at one or two other places in the town where the

Fairs and Popular Holidays at the end of the eighteenth century.

ceremony was repeated,—and the holiday was considered to be duly ushered in. At the Pleasure Fair, stalls were held in the Market Place and Humberstone Gate, and woollen cloth was an important article of sale.

TRINITY HOSPITAL CHAPEL.

The Easter Monday Hunt,

In the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, the Easter Monday Hunt was a popular amusement eagerly looked forward to. Early on this day, which to each succeeding generation conveys the exhilarating sense of the return of Spring, the Mayor and his Brethren, clad in their scarlet robes and attended by the Waits, annually repaired to a field on the Dane Hills known as the "Black Annis's Bower Close," where they passed the morning among the amusements of the Fair which was always a feature of this holiday. At noon, preparation was made for the chief event of the day,—the mock hunting of the hare,—by trailing at the tail of a horse for a full half hour over the adjoining fields a dead cat sprinkled with aniseed; an intricate series of turns and twists being made which finally ended at the

door of the Mayor's house in the town. A pack of hounds was now let loose from the spot whence the horse had started and, followed by a number of horsemen,—some being country gentlemen who had lent the hounds, others townsmen and amateur riders who were always forthcoming for the sport,—were soon in full cry over the limited course. The scene was watched with eager interest both by town officials and humble holiday-makers, for whom the chief amusement would appear to have consisted in the confusion arising from the incessant doubling and turning of the hounds and riders in following the intricate line of scent. The day ended with a "treat" at the Mayor's house, to which the more important of those present were invited. The origin of the Easter Monday Hunt is obscure, but it probably represented some vested interest or hunting rights anciently possessed by the Municipality in the neighbouring Forest of Leicester, as no mention of the sport is recorded until after its enclosure in the reign of Charles I. By the end of the eighteenth century however, this singular custom had completely died out, although traces of it lingered for long afterwards in the popularity of the Dane Hills as a place of resort by young people on Easter Monday.

The Whipping Toms on Shrove Tuesday.

A less inoffensive local pastime surviving from ancient times annually took place upon Shrove Tuesday, and was popularly supposed to commemorate the expulsion of the Danes from Leicester in the tenth century; but it more probably typified some obsolete possession or public right of way in the locality where it was held. This was the custom known as the "Whipping Toms," and the scene was the Newarke enclosure where, on the morning of that day a sort of small Fair was held, and a great number of people

assembled to witness and take part in games of single-stick and wrestling. These were formerly interspersed with cock-throwing,—a brutal sport which had always been a feature of this holiday, and consisted of aiming with short sticks at the wretched birds, previously placed in position for the purpose of being killed and won by the players. At a certain hour early in the afternoon, a signal was given to clear the Square, and many of the less rough among the crowd hastened to leave the spot, while a number of active men armed themselves with stout sticks, and wrapped their legs in hay-bands in self-defence against what was to follow. The Whipping Toms, three in number, and armed with heavy cart whips, now entered the Newarke, preceded by a man with a bell, the ringing of which authorised the free use of their whips upon those in possession of the Square. A rough and angry contest between the two parties at once commenced, usually ending in wounds and serious bruises,—the result not only of the legitimate scuffle, but of the fights which invariably accompanied its progress. This lasted for several hours, during which the crowd of idlers who always remained in the Newarke was driven hither and thither by the rushes of the combatants, and a scene of great uproar and confusion prevailed. It was not until the year 1845 that a determined attempt was made to put a stop to the custom, which was still observed in a modified form; and in a local Act of Parliament, (the Leicester Improvement Act, 1846,) a clause was inserted, forbidding it in future. But the next year, as the mob, some of whom carried brick ends in old stockings, again assembled to claim the ancient right, the Mayor, Mr. Joseph Fielding, was compelled to enforce the law, and some sharp fighting ensued. The disorderly crowd

however, was ultimately dispersed; and the Newarke has ever since been free from the annoyance of the Whipping Toms on Shrove Tuesday.

We have now glanced at the condition of our town at successive periods of its history, and have found in each the natural growth and development that time had wrought. We take leave of Ancient Leicester while yet there existed a great gap between its then condition and that of our own time. We leave it as it was more than a hundred years ago, with a population of under 17,000, without railways, cabs, electric or motor cars, bicycles or perambulators; without lucifer-matches, gas, electric-light, steel pens or sewing-machines; without telegraphs, photography, or telephones; without Limited Companies, Co-operative Stores, or representative Town and County Councils; without Board and Technical Schools, Provident Dispensaries, Free Libraries, Coffee-Houses, Public Parks, Illustrated Newspapers or the Penny Press and Postage; without Anæsthetics, Trained Nurses, Sanitary Inspectors, policemen or *umbrellas*;—without, in fact, a thousand things which contribute to the safety and comfort, if not to the absolute necessity, of our present every-day life.

Between to-day and a hundred years hence, who shall say what further developments and discoveries may follow, or how far the condition and institutions of a larger Leicester will differ from those of the present time. The beginning of the twentieth century has opened out a vision of material possibilities ahead which may, in a few generations, utterly dim the light of what has gone before. But while about our town still lingers here and there the spirit, and almost the repose, of its ancient Past, it should surely be the delight as

well as the duty of its citizens to identify its scattered monuments, and to cherish their preservation as treasures which the eddying stream of Time has left behind for our contemplation and refreshment.

Supplementary Notes.

A glimpse of some of the local events and features of the first half of the Nineteenth Century.

Supplementary Notes.

I.

1800 TO 1820. SOCIAL NOTES. NEWSPAPER ADVERTISEMENTS. THE HOSIERY TRADE. THE LUDDITES. NAPOLEON BONAPARTE.

Now that the unceasing flight of Time has turned, so to speak, the fresh page of a new century;—and looking back, as we do in this year of grace 1906, over a clear hundred years of change and development in our old town, it may be found interesting to name a few of the local events which stand out during the first half of the nineteenth century, and to glance at some of the conditions and causes leading to the great transformations of the present day;—marking the transition period from old to modern life.

In the absence of any local event of much importance during the first twenty years of the century, a few features of its social life at that period, and of the exciting events abroad, as related in the local journals, may be touched upon.

The prolonged war with France under Bonaparte, which began in 1803 and lasted until his downfall in 1815, largely occupied public attention, and brought its share of suspense and sorrow into households, here as elsewhere, whose members were serving their country abroad, and who had little opportunity for home communication except by tardy and often uncertain means.

The general depression of trade and the chronic poverty

of the framework-knitters of Leicester and the Midland district was an unhappy feature of the period, lasting, indeed, till nearly the middle of the century, and resulting in occasional outbreaks of rioting,—the inevitable outcome of their frequent distress and of the miserable conditions under which they lived.

The life of the middle classes, confined as it then was, within limits which to our modern habits would seem insufferably narrow was, however, now and then enlivened by some local event which brought a welcome relief into its dull monotony. Thus in 1809 the Jubilee of King George III. had been celebrated by divine service in crowded churches, "particularly St. Martin's," as the Leicester *Journal* of the day informs us;—also by the roasting of sheep in several streets, and by "Mr. Mayor's" entertainment of a number of "the most respectable inhabitants" at dinner at the Three Crowns, followed by a Ball and supper at the Hotel Assembly Rooms; while an exhibition of fireworks "gratis" at the Vauxhall gardens pleased the populace. The great comet of 1811 had been watched with universal interest and awe; and more carefully observed by several fortunate owners of telescopes. In addition to more than one musical anniversary service at St. Martin's, the needs of the Infirmary had been the occasion of other efforts of a refreshing simplicity, and in marked contrast with the methods of the present day,—as when in May 1809 the exhibition of an air balloon sent up from the playground of the Free Grammar School in Highcross Street, with the sale of tickets at one shilling each to view the sight from the enclosure, brought the sum of £8 5s. 6d. for the benefit of the Institution.* Or

* This balloon, it may be mentioned, travelled exceedingly well, and landed at Mickleover in Derbyshire.

when, on the evening of Christmas Day of that year, Handel's oratorio of "The Messiah" was performed for the benefit of the same charity at the Great Meeting Chapel in Bond Street, for which one shilling admission was charged, "or half-a-crown for the eastern aisle,"—now difficult to locate, but probably meaning the front row of pews.

Newspaper Advertisements.

The social life of Leicester was not very different from that prevailing towards the close of the eighteenth century. Advertisements filling the larger portion of the small local newspapers afford a glimpse into some of the pursuits and amusements in vogue. State lotteries were largely advertised, the popular taste for speculation and gambling being keen, and stimulated by tempting opportunities. Society during the latter half of the eighteenth century and the beginning of the nineteenth was steeped in this mode of dissipation, which largely subsided during the middle of the century, only to be revived with equal zest at the present time in other forms and among all classes. Advertisements of quack medicines, toilet preparations, and millinery, with those of the coaching offices, and, at the half-year, of the dancing-masters and private schools or "academies," supply suggestive and rather quaint reading. Thus the Leicester *Chronicle* of January 4th, 1812, "printed and published by George Bown, Market Place, price 8d., or 9s. per quarter," has the following appendage to an announcement of the re-opening of "J. Baker's Academy, High Street." "Impressed with gratitude, J. B. returns his sincere thanks to his friends and those who have repeatedly recommended him, assures them and the public, it shall be his constant endeavour and highest aim to make the improvement of his Pupils keep pace with the increasing support with which he is honoured."

The Infirmary records its admitted and discharged Patients. On January 11th, 1812, the figures run: "In-Patients admitted 16. Discharged 17. Out-Patients admitted 9. Discharged 11, showing that the Out-Patient system was conducted on a very different scale from that of to-day.

The *Chronicle* gives a descriptive article each month upon the Fashions, with details of Promenade and Evening Costumes, and of a Fancy Ball dress. The Leicester Musical Society advertises its six Subscription Concerts at the New Assembly Rooms; to begin precisely at six o'clock. "Tickets for the six nights, *ball and cards included*, one guinea each. The admission for non-subscribers 6s.; for non-residents 5s." The Stewards are well-known names, Dr. Freer and the Rev. Thos. Burnaby. "A Main of Cocks will be fought at Blaby for ten guineas a battle or one hundred guineas the Main, between the gentlemen of Leicestershire and the gentlemen of Warwickshire." A new Cock-Pit, described as near the New Walk, seems to have been opened about this time. "Ran away, an apprentice." A minute description of his appearance and clothing follows, and all persons are forbidden to harbour or to employ him.

We are not surprised to find that travelling shows supplied interest and amusement to the townspeople, and were duly advertised in the local journals. Thus in September 1812, Beilby's Museum exhibits at the White Swan in the Market Place "Quadrupeds, Birds, Reptiles, Fishes, Insects and Shells from every part of the globe, prepared so as to appear really as when alive." Also "Three surprising Albini children, beautiful to behold," are to be seen in a travelling Pavilion during the October Fair of that year. A curious sound nowadays has the "Leicester Society for the

Prosecution of Robbers, etc," which announces its Annual Meeting in May 1812. This Association lasted many years, and might seem to imply either that official vigilance was very lax, or that the conscientious co-operation of private individuals in helping to detect crime was very keen at that period. The Society, however, probably existed chiefly for the mutual assistance of its subscribers in defraying the expenses incurred in the tracing and recovery of stolen property, or in bringing defaulters to justice.

Under the head of "Education of the People" appears the following: "This day is published, printed in a close but distinct type, price 3s. 6d. bound, or 13 to the dozen, 'The Poor Child's Library,' being a collection of Moral, Didactic, Economical, and Religious Pieces in prose and verse, consisting partly of Selections from the best and most pious Authors, partly of Tracts published in a detached form for the same purpose, and partly of original Pieces. By the Rev. — —. Intended as a Present to young people on leaving Day or Sunday Schools." How would the youth of our twentieth century schools appreciate a parting gift of this description? Contrasted with the plethora of attractive and entertaining books for the young at the present time, it brings vividly before our minds the then very limited supply of such reading. A Cyclopædia published and offered for sale as an "Unequalled New Year's Present" is on the contrary, upon quite the most modern lines of bookselling advertisement.

It is singular to notice the difference from modern custom observed in the list of deaths in the weekly journals. Following upon the name and date it was apparently not uncommon to add remarks and details which now seem strangely weak

or out of place, and in some cases irresistably comic. Thus, "On New Year's Day, Mr. R. A., of Manchester. His death adds another monitor to the many thousands that have preceded it, of the incertitude of life:—he had taken a walk on that day when, finding himself suddenly indisposed, he rested upon a bench at Shute Hill, from which, soon after he was removed, Death closed his eyes in peace." To another name is added, "On his death-bed, he is said to have expressed a wish that a favourite daughter, about seven years of age, should enter eternity with him. Although then apparently well, awful to relate, the day after her father's decease she breathed her last! They were both interred at the same time, in one grave." And yet another. "His death was caused by smoking a pipe. Some person in company *for a joke*, put some gunpowder in the tobacco he was using; it of course exploded and caused the fragments of tobacco-pipe to enter the roof of his mouth. Instant death ensued! He has left thirteen children to lament his loss."

To pass on to more solid matter. The limited number of local trades on a large scale as compared with the present time is very remarkable. Except in connection with the hosiery manufacture and two or three iron foundries employing a large number of men there were, until nearly the middle of the century, but few great centres of labour. Instead of the huge factories in which thousands of shoe-operatives carry on the now dominant trade of the town, dividing the process of manufacture into many sections of skilled labour, the homely and often philosophic shoemaker, —or cordwainer, as he was then technically termed, seated with his apprentice beside his bench, with waxed thread, awl, last and hammer ready to hand, supplied the local need in

footwear. The household and other trades necessary in a civilised community were conducted upon the same limited scale. The indiarubber elastic weaving industry, which at one time almost rivalled the shoe trade in local importance was, like the latter, of much later introduction, and does not come within our short review.

The Hosiery Trade.

The manufacture of hosiery,—from worsted, lambs' wool, or cotton,—was the staple trade of Leicester at this period and for long afterwards, and employed a very large number of operatives then as now. In addition to the goods produced on the knitting-frames in the workshops, stockings and in course of time piece-fabrics also were largely made in the homes of the framework-knitters both in the town and in the surrounding villages, upon machines hired from the hosiery manufacturers. The system of hire adopted under the term of "frame rents and charges" led however, to frequent disputes between employers and employed, and was eventually prohibited by Act of Parliament.

In connection with the hosiery trade of the town the spinning of worsted and its preliminary operations were an important industry, as at present. The wool required was chiefly home-grown, while the cotton yarn also largely used by the hosiers was procured from various localities at a distance, where water-power was available for the spinning-mills. In the worsted manufacture the first process, after washing, was the preparation of the wool by combing,—a heavy and laborious occupation employing a very numerous body of men. The succeeding operations of preparing and spinning were chiefly carried out by women, the frames being turned by hand; and both combing and spinning were confined to operatives living in the town, while a large portion of the hosiery

manufacture was carried on by the framework-knitters in the villages, as before stated. One of the first of the Leicester manufacturers to provide steam-power for spinning worsted was Mr. Thomas Fielding of West Bond Street, in the year 1822, and no opposition appears to have been made to the new method, which did not greatly reduce the number of persons employed in that part of the process.

A season of acute poverty and distress resulted from the decay of trade during the war with America, and in 1812 the Leicester framework-knitters met and drew up an address to the Mayor, asking his concurrence in presenting a Petition to the Prince Regent and House of Commons for the removal of their grievances. The Mayor sympathised, and congratulated the knitters upon their moderation and orderly conduct, in contrast to the riotous proceedings in neighbouring districts. The first outbreak of the so-called Luddites had begun in Nottingham towards the end of 1811, and serious disturbances had taken place in that town.* Stocking and lace frames had been destroyed by these bands of organised rioters, under the impression that the use of machinery was largely responsible for the scarcity of employment and consequent distress. The riots were subdued for a time by strongly repressive measures, but broke out again in 1816, when a terribly bad harvest had greatly increased

* The origin of the term "Luddites" seems to have arisen from the circumstance that many years previously, a half-witted man named Ned Lud living in a Leicestershire village, who was often the butt of idle boys, on one occasion pursued a tormentor into a house occupied by several stocking-frames. Failing to capture the boy, he vented his anger upon the frames by breaking them to pieces. A broken machine was thenceforth colloquially said to be the work of "Lud," and the chief leader of the riotous faction took the name of General Lud.

the price of corn; and a dangerous discontent spread over the greater part of the kingdom. In this year wheat rose to 103 shillings a quarter, and in October the corn was still green. In April 1817, machines having been broken at Loughborough by Luddites from Nottingham, still sterner measures were resorted to, five of these misguided men being condemned to death at the Leicestershire Assizes, and shortly afterwards executed at Leicester on the same day, in front of the Bridewell then standing in Infirmary Square; another criminal, sentenced on a different charge, suffering death with them. This harsh and determined treatment, combined fortunately with a gradual revival of trade, put an end to these unhappy episodes in the manufacturing life of this district.

In connection with the earlier Luddite riots at Nottingham, and as a possibly unique instance of journalistic reticence in favourable contrast with the eagerness of a portion of the modern newspaper press to forestall events and to publish sensational details, the following announcement in the Leicester *Journal* of February 1st 1812, may be found interesting. "Notwithstanding the anxious curiosity of some of our readers to see ample details of the proceedings at Nottingham and the neighbourhood we will not, we cannot, gratify them, even if we lose their esteem. Viewing the whole of these proceedings with the most painful regret, with the most unfeigned sorrow, we will not allow ourselves the privilege of satisfying our friends with a recital of events which it is our heart's wish to see speedily terminated. A spark from the smallest rush-light is dangerous in the midst of combustibles!" Though somewhat self-satisfied in spirit and affected in style, yet surely wise and sound in principle!

Napoleon Bonaparte.

The continued war with France, and the battles in the Peninsula, coupled with the national unrest and suspicion of Bonaparte's ultimate designs on this country, had disturbed public feeling in Leicester as in other parts of England during and after the first decade of the century. In July 1812 the Leicester newspapers began to publish the Bulletins of the progress of the Grand Army of France on its campaign in Russia, which were copied from the London journals; and these were continued weekly until after the disastrous retreat from Moscow in the early and severe winter which followed. They were no doubt read with intense interest and with both the fascination and distrust which the strange magnetism of Napoleon inspired throughout Europe, though in our own island fear and hatred of him preponderated to a marked degree.

When at length the dreaded "Boney" was banished to Elba in 1814, every one breathed more freely, only to be startled and alarmed eleven months afterwards by the news of his sudden landing in the south of France, determined once more to try his fortune among the French army and people. This was on March 1st 1815, and all Europe heard with consternation of his welcome by the troops and the rapid advance of his little army to Paris, which he reached in twenty days, meeting with little more than a nominal resistance, and with the most cordial reception all along his march. News was slow to travel in those days, and it was not until the 24th of March that the Leicester *Journal* thus relates the event, copied from the London posts of the 22nd. "Never was there a week of such bustle and anxiety in London;—never was there a week pregnant with such eventful and extraordinary occurrences. With a rapidity

unexampled has this extraordinary man, in the space of little more than a fortnight, and at the head of only a few followers advanced, * * * and it appears that not a single gun has been fired to arrest his progress." The Powers who had signed the Treaty of Paris in 1814 now formally declared Bonaparte to be outside all civil and social relations, and consigned him to public vengeance as "an enemy and disturber of the peace of the world." The rest of the story is familiar to all. Napoleon left Paris on the 12th June with the intention of scattering and singly defeating the English and Prussian armies,—but by the 21st had returned to his capital in flight and despair, crushed for ever by his overwhelming defeat at Waterloo. His abdication quickly followed, with his surrender to the British at Rochefort, and subsequent exile to St. Helena, where he died in 1821.

In the Leicester *Journal* of June 23rd appears the following Postscript:—

"Downing Street,
June 22nd.

Official Bulletin.

Defeat of Bonaparte by the Allies.

Despatches from the Duke of Wellington dated Waterloo, the 19th, Monday, states that on the preceding day Bonaparte attacked with his whole force the British lines, supported by a corps of Prussians, which attack, after a long and sanguinary engagement terminated in the Complete Overthrow of the enemy's army with the loss of

150 Pieces of Cannon and 2 Eagles!

During the night the Prussians under Marshal Blucher who joined in the pursuit of the enemy captured

60 Pieces of Cannon

and a large portion of Bonaparte's baggage. The armies were in full pursuit of the enemy. Two generals were taken."

In the next week's issue we learn that "immediately upon the close of the last publication the Union Coach arrived decorated with laurels, bearing the glorious and gratifying intelligence of the complete overthrow of the army under Bonaparte by the illustrious Duke of Wellington." The excitement in the town had been intense, and further news having arrived of the flight and abdication of Napoleon, the populace assembled in expectation of another be-laurelled mail coach, with particulars of the events. "So early as four o'clock the next morning," says the *Journal*, "the bells prepared the inhabitants to expect by the mail great and important news: previous to its arrival the whole town was in motion, and the bulk of the population might be considered as assembled in groups, from the Post Office to about a mile upwards; the windows were crowded to excess, and the numbers below were composed of all descriptions. Joy and exultation beamed on the countenances of the well-wishers of their country. * * * At last the mail arrived, but unadorned with laurels," —a disappointment to the patriotic crowd, but doubtless soon forgotten in the interest of the details to hand.

It is in accordance with the humanity of more modern times that in the same newspaper of June 30th an appeal is made to the ladies of Leicester and the county for linen rag and flannel rollers to be sent to the Female Asylum in the Newarke and forwarded "on Tuesday next" to London for transmission to the wounded soldiers at Brussels. A quick response was made, and a goodly bale of articles despatched to London. But the prompt and kindly action bore no fruit,

for the Government stores being found equal to the demand, the articles were shortly afterwards returned. Notice of a Meeting presently follows, to consider what should be done with the rejected gift. The *Journal* of July 21st announces that "At a Common Hall on Wednesday last the Corporation of Leicester unanimously voted the sum of two hundred guineas" in aid of the "Waterloo Subscription," which was also largely contributed to by private individuals.

The arrival in Torbay of the warship Bellerophon with the ex-Emperor on board, and his subsequent departure for St. Helena after his earnest entreaty to be allowed to live in England under any surveillance the Government might see fit to impose, are duly recorded in the newspapers. A vivid description is given of the contrast of Napoleon's demeanour on ship-board previous to the confirmation of the sentence of exile, with that after learning that England declined to harbour him under any conditions whatever. At first he allowed himself to be freely gazed upon by the boatloads of visitors who thronged the bay and gratified their curiosity by the sight of the illustrious prisoner, attired in a green coat with red facings and gold epaulettes, and a silver star on the left breast, walking the deck and conversing with his generals. But after his doom was sealed, his sullen dissatisfaction and his "ferocity" of countenance impressed all with whom he came into contact. He now was seldom visible on deck, and the intrusive spectators were kept at a greater distance until all the preparations were completed, and the unhappy captive was borne away to his last exile. Thus disappeared from the world's stage this remarkable man, who had kept Europe in a ferment for more than fifteen years, and whose personal magnetism was equalled only by his superb self-confidence,

brilliant and reckless audacity, and callous indifference to the sacrifice of human life in the pursuit of his personal ambition.

II.

THE REV. ROBERT HALL. MISS LINWOOD. THE VAUGHAN FAMILY. THE ARNOLDS. THE REV. THOMAS ROBINSON. MR. JOHN NICHOLS. MR. JOHN THROSBY. MR. WILLIAM GARDINER.

Mention should now be made of several notable inhabitants of Leicester whose early years had been passed in the eighteenth century, but whose chief work in connection with this town took place during the period we are now considering. Foremost among them may be placed the celebrated Baptist preacher the Rev. Robert Hall. He was born in the year 1764 at Arnesby, about six miles distant from Leicester on the road to Welford ; but his local settlement as minister of the Baptist Chapel in Harvey Lane did not take place until the year 1807. This plain, red-brick building, hidden away among now little-used bye streets, still remains outwardly the same as when his striking oratory drew crowds of eager listeners. Strangers who happened to be visiting the town, public speakers, barristers, and Judges at Assize times, all made a point of hearing him,—and we have it upon Mr. Gardiner's authority that it was not uncommon for busy men to come down from London by Saturday's Mail

The Rev. Robert Hall.

Coach and return on Sunday night, in order to attend his services. This, ninety years ago, and with the travelling inconveniences it entailed, shows an extraordinary appreciation of the talents of the great preacher. Robert Hall's mode of commencing a discourse was slow, with feeble voice and hesitating manner. "As he proceeded," says Mr. Gardiner,—himself of course frequently a listener,—"his voice gained strength and flexibility, his utterance became more rapid, and so neat was his delivery that I have distinctly heard twenty or thirty syllables in a breath." Shorthand writers from London attempted to take down his sermons; but no sooner was he fairly launched upon his subject than they laid down their pens in amazement and despair. It required the closest attention of an active mind to follow him at these times; and to write down his words was impossible. Inspiration would appear the only term that could be applied to his utterances when, with a gentle swaying motion of his body as he poured forth a torrent of words, his spirit seemed to be abstracted into the image he was creating. This great divine, who was also a learned scholar and acute critic of style, removed to Bristol in 1826 and died in 1831. A striking statue of Robert Hall in white Sicilian marble has been erected to his memory in De Montfort Square.

Another remarkable inhabitant at this time who, although not a native, passed the greater part of her long life in Leicester, was the celebrated Miss Linwood. Her wonderful industry and skill in producing an original style of needlework in coloured worsteds acquired a more than national celebrity; and her Exhibition in Leicester Square, London, open during many years of the first part of the nineteenth century, was looked upon as one of the sights of Town. Miss Linwood

Miss Linwood.

for many years conducted a young ladies' school at the upper end of Belgrave Gate, which her mother Mrs. Hannah Linwood had established in 1764; and she remained in this house until her death in 1845. Strangers passing through Leicester would frequently break their journey and miss a coach by stopping to call on Miss Linwood in the hope of an interview with the gifted lady, and perchance of being favoured with a glimpse of her finely-executed work. When the "Leicester Infantry Volunteers" were enrolled during a fervour of patriotism in 1794, Miss Linwood presented them with a beautifully embroidered banner. Mr. Gardiner recalls being once privileged to watch her at work, surrounded by pincushions bristling with needles threaded with many-coloured worsteds; and relates how, after deftly using her needle upon her work erected on an upright frame before her, she would retire a few paces to judge of the effect of her stitches. Her method was first to sketch in outline her subject, (often copied from a classical painting,) then a second time in detail, and finally to fill it in by the process described. Most of her worsteds were dyed by her manufacturing friends in Leicester; but when their efforts failed to produce the exact tint she needed, her own energy and resource often enabled her to dye them herself. Pieces of Miss Linwood's needlework which, from their delicate gradation of colour and shade, at a distance resemble oil-paintings, are still to be seen in old collections all over the kingdom; and a recent local effort on the part of two or three public-spirited ladies resulted in the purchase and presentation to the Town Museum, in April 1891, of one of her more elaborate efforts, a copy of "The Nativity," by Carlo Maratti. Miss Linwood died in 1845 at the age of 89, and was buried at St. Margaret's Church where,

ST. MARGARET'S CHURCH. (FROM THE NORTH-EAST)

either from a morbid fear that her memory would quickly be allowed to pass into oblivion, or from a desire to be constantly reminded of her own mortality, she had ordered her name to be previously engraved on her parents' tombstone, and under it the words, "died in the nineteenth century." A separate tablet was afterwards put up by her friends, with an appreciative memorial inscription.

The Vaughan family.

We now pass on to the Vaughan family—a remarkable one, whose name will always be honoured in Leicester. It is now chiefly associated with its most recent representative in this town, the late Rev. Canon David Vaughan, D.D., for many years the beloved Vicar of St. Martin's parish, the respected Master of the Wyggeston Hospital, the devoted worker for education and for the aid of the sick and needy, and the friend of every effort for promoting the moral and intellectual well-being of the people.

Dr. James Vaughan, his grandfather, was, as already mentioned, one of the earliest physicians to the Leicester Infirmary from its opening in 1771: and most of its rules were framed by him. He was born at Leominster, but after finishing his medical studies he settled in Leicester, where he married a daughter of Mr. Alderman Smalley, and dwelt in a large house at the corner of Friar Lane and New Street, and afterwards in High Street. He practised in this town for forty years, much respected in the profession; and Mr. Gardiner speaks of him as a man of genius and quick perception. Five of his seven sons attained to positions of great distinction. He had given to each the advantages of a public-school and University education, with the understanding that this would be their sole patrimony; and he earnestly desired them to make full use of their abilities,

and not to be satisfied with less than eminence in their respective professions. Two of his sons became Privy Councillors; one of these, Sir John Vaughan, being also a Baron of the Court of Exchequer; while the other, Sir Charles Vaughan, was a distinguished member of the diplomatic service, and at one time Minister to the United States of America, where he enjoyed great popularity. A third son, Dr. Peter Vaughan, entered the church, and was elected Warden of Merton College, Oxford, in 1810, and afterwards appointed to the Deanery of Chester.

Dr. Henry Vaughan. the second son, who was afterwards known as Sir Henry Halford, practised for a time with his father in Leicester, but afterwards settled in London, and quickly rose into notice as a clever young physician. He changed his name to that of Halford in 1809 from the reason that through his mother, who was grand-daughter to Sir Richard Halford of Wistow Hall near Leicester, he was named under the Will of the last baronet, Sir Charles Halford, to succeed to the Wistow estate upon the death of his widow. Later in the same year, through his great medical reputation and his professional attendance upon members of the King's family he was created a baronet by royal favour, and was henceforth known as Sir Henry Halford, although he did not succeed to the Wistow property until 1814. He was successively Physician to Kings George III. and IV. and William IV., and had a valuable practice among the highest circles in London. Sir Henry Halford became President of the Royal College of Physicians in 1820, and rendered signal service in that capacity. He lived chiefly in London, but usually spent the summer months at Wistow, where he made great additions and improvements to the house and grounds.

ST MARTIN'S CHURCH, 1906. (SOUTH-WEST).

Dr. Vaughan's youngest son Edward Thomas is more immediately connected with the town of Leicester, as the respected Vicar of St. Martin's parish from the year 1802 to 1829, and as the father of a second generation of very able brothers, no fewer than three of whom were Vicars of St. Martin's between the years 1841 and 1893. He was strongly evangelical in his views, and unflinching in the expression of them; but his sincerity was liked and respected, and his death was sincerely mourned by his people and by the town at large. After an interval of twelve years his sons Charles, Edward Thomas, and David successively took charge of the parish; and thus, for upwards of a hundred and twenty years the name of Vaughan has been a household word in Leicester, and has stood for all that is high in principle, devoted in the discharge of duty, and earnest in labour for the relief of suffering. The handsome stone Porch in front of the south door of St. Martin's Church was erected by subscription in 1896 as a memorial of the long connection and faithful services of Mr. Vaughan and his three sons in that parish.

The Arnolds.

Another family, contemporary with the earlier Vaughans, and in high estimation in the town, though their name in it has long vanished, was that of the Arnolds. Dr. Arnold was the colleague of Dr. Vaughan at the opening of the Infirmary in 1771. He was greatly skilled in the management of the insane, and presided over a private Asylum in West Bond Street, as previously mentioned. In 1795 his son, Dr. Thomas Arnold, was associated with him for a time as physician to the Infirmary, but he removed to Stamford five years later, and his brother William was appointed in his place. Dr. William Arnold attended as physician to the

Infirmary for no less than forty years,—from 1800 to 1840. He was a most cultivated man, a connoisseur in Art and Music, and a social favourite. A third brother, the Rev. Henry Arnold, is described by Mr. Gardiner as a man of much learning and a deep thinker, with a remarkable vigour and originality of mind. Mr. Gardiner also characterises the elder Dr. Arnold as a cautious, deliberate, and sure practitioner, somewhat in contrast with Dr. Vaughan, who was quick in perception and bold and decisive in action.

The Rev. Thomas Robinson.

At the beginning of the nineteenth century the Rev. Thomas Robinson, Vicar of St. Mary's, was also a great power in Leicester. He was a man of large mind, and a capable and active organiser, for he was instrumental in establishing the earliest parochial schools in the town, about the year 1785; and to him also is to be ascribed the founding of the Female Asylum in the Newarke for the training of young girls as servants. This was in 1800; and the old building still stands, and still fulfils its charitable and useful mission, under the guidance of a Committee of ladies and a matron. Mr. Robinson was a powerful and animated preacher, and like his contemporary, Mr. Vaughan, held evangelical views. His death in 1813 was felt as a great loss to his parish and to a wide circle of friends and admirers.

Mr. John Nichols.

Though a Londoner by birth, and never a resident in Leicester, Mr. John Nichols, the well-known historian of our county, must here be mentioned, if only to record our admiration for the patience and research by which he accumulated the enormous store of information which fills the pages of his great work. His mental activity must have been amazing, and it is difficult to believe that his "History of Leicester-

shire" is really the work of one man.* He was a near connection by marriage, and a friend through life, of Mr. Cradock of Gumley; and his second wife, whom he married in 1778, was a daughter of Mr. William Green of Hinckley. His interest in this county was therefore quite a natural one; and the town and neighbourhood of Leicester have been fortunate indeed in attracting a historian of such knowledge, ability, and unbounded industry.

Mr. John Throsby.

Possessed of less learning and social position, but a native of Leicester and an ardent antiquarian was Mr. John Throsby, a man of great worth and native talent; and for over thirty years the respected clerk of St. Martin's parish. His "History and Antiquities of the Ancient Town of Leicester" and his "Views" and "Excursions" in Leicestershire, though of less historical value, are more compact and readable narratives than the ponderous volumes af Nichols, which they preceded by several years.† He was a skilful draughtsman, and some of his drawings for illustrating his own work were afterwards lent by him to Nichols for the same purpose. Mr. Throsby died in 1803.

Mr. William Gardiner.

A few particulars must now be given of the remarkable inhabitant of Leicester so often quoted in the preceding pages,—Mr. William Gardiner,—who grew to manhood during the latter years of the eighteenth century, and even then had become a notable man, and an ornament to the society

* The first of the eight volumes appeared in 1795, and the last in 1811. The Index to the whole was not completed till 1815, when Nichols was seventy years of age.

† Throsby's "Views in Leicestershire" were published in 1789; the "Excursions in Leicestershire" in 1790; and the "History and Antiquities" in 1791. He also wrote other less important works on local history

of the town. His striking musical ability, his general intelligence and culture, intense mental and bodily activity, and sprightly and courteous manners, gained him the notice and respect of all with whom he came in contact. Indeed, the multitude of his introductions and the numberless acquaintances and friendships he made among the musical, literary, and scientific men of the time is astonishing, when it is remembered that he was only the son of a simple Leicester hosier,—from whom he doubtless inherited his love of music,—and that he possessed no recommendation in the eyes of strangers other than his own strong personality and enthusiasm for all the Arts. Music was his passion; and this he promoted to his utmost during a long life, which lasted to the middle of the nineteenth century.

Mr. Gardiner claimed with justice to be the first to introduce the name and genius of Beethoven into England. In the year 1794 the Abbé Dobler, an accomplished musician who was chaplain to the Elector of Cologne, being forced from political reasons to leave Germany, was offered a shelter in this country by a Roman Catholic lady of property who had formed his acquaintance abroad,—the Hon. Mrs. Bowater, of Little Dalby Hall. Here he at once sought the friendship of the well-known dilettante in music, William Gardiner, and subsequently showed him a violin trio in E flat lately written by a young musician—Louis van Beethoven,—the son of an innkeeper and chorister in the Elector's Chapel at Bonn. The latter having recognised in the youth an original genius for music had placed him under the tuition of the great Joseph Haydn at Vienna; and on leaving Germany the Abbé had hastily put the Trio into his trunk with other instrumental music. On looking over the composition, Mr.

Gardiner's interest was at once aroused, and inviting Mr. Valentine and other local violinists to try it, the Trio was played over with surprise and delight in a room in the town in 1794, several years before the works of Beethoven were introduced into London. With true appreciation of the originality and power shown by the young composer, Mr. Gardiner keenly watched the growth and development of his remarkable genius which, as it ripened, inspired in him an enthusiasm and reverence almost amounting to awe; and on every possible occasion he endeavoured to awaken a similar emotion in all lovers of music in Leicester and elsewhere.

As a link with the life and notable events of the past it is interesting to read in Mr. Gardiner's Memoirs entitled "Music and Friends," how he journeyed with a companion to Paris in 1802, and, failing to secure berths on any of the packet-boats from Dover, at that time crowded with returning French refugees, they crossed the Channel in a cutter, with unpleasant experiences. In Paris he saw the ruins of the Bastille, and other havoc wrought by the Revolutionary mob. He had many introductions, and was invited to dine with one of Napoleon's Generals at the Etat Majeur. The visit was a ceremonious one, but he noted as practical evidence of the sentiment of Liberty and Equality then prevailing, that two vacant places at table were presently filled by the sergeant and corporal of the guard which had presented arms in the courtyard upon his arrival. Later the same evening Mr. Gardiner attended the Opera on the occasion of a state visit by Napoleon, then first Consul, and he describes the impressiveness of the scene when the latter entered his box amid the plaudits of the assembly, clad in his consular robe of scarlet and gold, and followed by "a crowd of Generals."

He saw Napoleon mount his charger to review his troops in the Place du Carrousel, and records that he leapt into the saddle "with a neatness that could not have been exceeded by Astley himself." The appearance of the Egyptian Mamalukes, who entered the Square at full gallop, their many-coloured garments streaming in the wind, struck him as "ludicrous in the extreme."

But Mr. Gardiner's visit to Paris was cut short. Some thoughtless words he had uttered in public had been overheard and noted in the vigorous system of espionage everywhere adopted, and through an intimation of danger from the Bureau of Police, he hurriedly left Paris to avoid arrest.

In the musical life of Leicester until the middle of the nineteenth century Mr. Gardiner continued to fill a conspicuous place. In his early days he was the all-round musician, ready to lend his hand or voice on every musical occasion, or his ear and judgment when required,—as when in 1790, then scarcely more than a boy, he had been placed on the Committee for deciding upon the particular tunes out of the multitude proposed, which the new chimes of St. Martin's Church should be made to play,* having previously assisted Arnold, the bell-founder, in tuning the fresh peal. Later on, he was the adviser and assistant in all local musical arrangements; the frequenter of special performances in London and elsewhere; and through life the friend and patron of musical talent. From his sensitive and high-strung temperament he was often, however, a severe and impatient critic. The writer well remembers the stern voice of displeasure in which he once addressed a young man

* These chimes were still in use in 1838, when "Music and Friends" was written.

ST. MARGARET'S CHURCH. (FROM THE SOUTH-EAST).

whom he had recommended as pianoforte accompanist on the occasion of a musical party in her father's house, and who had failed to justify his expectations. She also recalls the fine profile, the keen and searching glance, thick wavy locks and frilled shirt-front which characterised this small but distinguished- looking man.

Besides the "Music and Friends" already referred to, Mr. Gardiner published "The Music of Nature" and "Sights in Italy," all chatty and discursive works, full of individuality and observation, and interspersed with songs and musical fragments from favourite composers, as well as others of his own composition. Under the title of "Sacred Melodies," he compiled a collection of hymn-tunes chiefly adapted from subjects by the great Masters. These were for long extensively used in both public and private worship, but modern taste prefers a somewhat plainer style of psalmody. Later volumes of "Sacred Melodies" were devoted to Anthems and other sacred vocal compositions.

In the year 1848, when quite an old man, Mr. Gardiner travelled to Bonn on the Rhine, the birthplace of Beethoven, to witness the inauguration of the statue erected in memory of the great composer. Musical and important people from all parts of Europe assembled to do honour to the event, which was also graced by the presence of the King and Queen of Prussia, and Queen Victoria and Prince Albert of England. After the unveiling of the statue in the great Square, and when the parchment signed by the Royalties and the Committee was about to be deposited in its base, one of the University Professors announced that among the spectators was an Englishman who had been the first to introduce the music of Beethoven into England, and proposed that he also

should be invited to sign the document. Mr. Gardiner was called to the platform and directed to write his name under those of "Victoria" and "Albert," an order which he obeyed with alacrity, and records as the greatest and most unexpected honour of his life. It is likewise an honour to his native town that one of its citizens should have been thus intimately associated with the national tribute paid to the memory of the greatest musical genius the world has ever produced. Mr. Gardiner died in 1853, at the ripe age of 83.

The Rev. Charles Berry.

The name of the Rev. Charles Berry is familiar to most of the old inhabitants of Leicester. During his unusually long life he played an important part in the social and intellectual life of the town, and was one of its most respected citizens. He came as a stranger to Leicester in 1803, on being appointed minister of the Great Meeting Unitarian Chapel in Bond Street, and was then only nineteen years of age. For many years he conducted a private school for boys, held in the old-fashioned room above the north gateway into the Castle Yard; and here many of the afterwards leading men of the town were educated. He was a man of calm and solid judgment; of great learning and classical attainments; a severe critic of literary style, and a good musician. He remained minister of the Great Meeting for fifty-six years, his friendship much sought and valued by all creeds and classes, and at various times he received gratifying tokens of respect and affection in the form of testimonials and presentations from his congregation and from former pupils. Many still living will remember his pleasant home for some years on the Narborough Road, with its delightful garden skirting the river banks, and gay with flowers, the especial pride and pleasure of Mrs. Berry, who was also a notable housewife,

and sister to Mr. Thomas Paget of Humberstone. Mr. Berry left Leicester in the latter part of his life, and died in 1877, at the advanced age of 93 years.

NORTH GATEWAY AS SEEN FROM THE CASTLE YARD. (1899).

III.

ACCESSION OF GEORGE IV. OPENING OF ST. GEORGE'S CHURCH. INFIRMARY FESTIVAL AT ST. MARGARET'S. HONORARY MEDICAL STAFF OF THE INFIRMARY. DANET'S HALL. WESTCOTES. THE NEW HALL. THE NICHOLSON FAMILY. THE MECHANICS' INSTITUTE. OPENING OF THE LEICESTER AND SWANNINGTON RAILWAY.

On February 3rd, 1820, George IV. was proclaimed King, —the Mayor, accompanied, according to custom, by members of the Corporation and the High Sheriff, reading the Proclamation at the High Cross, Coal Hill, and in the Market Place successively.

With the opening of the new reign a new era in the life of Leicester may be said to have commenced. The application of steam-power to the machinery for worsted-spinning, and the lighting of the streets by gas, each separately marked an approach to modern methods which benefitted the town by supplanting the primitive conditions of the past. Gas-lamps in the streets were introduced in 1821; a most welcome improvement upon the dim oil lamps previously in use, besides rendering the thoroughfares far safer at night. In 1823, two years after the formation of the Leicester Gas Company, the management of their Works was entrusted to Mr. Charles B. Robinson; and it remained in the able hands of succeeding members of this family until several years after the purchase of the Gas Undertaking by the Corporation in 1878.

In 1827 St. George's Church, which had been two years in

ST. MARGARET'S CHURCH. (NAVE AND CHANCEL.) 1906.

building, was opened for public worship,—the first modern church erected in Leicester, and no doubt greatly needed, as the town was fast spreading in that neighbourhood. The early years of this church were unfortunate, from the ruin of a fine window by a violent storm during the summer of 1835, and later on, in the destruction of its spire by lightning on the 1st August 1846; and the writer well remembers her feeling of calamity and almost of awe at the appearance of the stricken steeple on the morning after that notable thunderstorm, as seen from the windows of her parents' house at some distance. St. George's Church.

In the following year the County Gaol on the Welford Road, designed and carried out by Mr. William Parsons, the county architect and surveyor, was completed. The county prisoners from the Gaol in Highcross Street were transferred to it; while those from the smaller Borough Prison took their place, and the last named and now useless building was soon afterwards demolished for the erection of houses upon its site.

The year 1827 is also memorable from the three days' musical Festival held in St. Margaret's Church for the benefit of the Infirmary. Since the important performance in St. Martin's in 1774, several of its Anniversaries had been celebrated in the same church. This effort, however, was on a larger scale. An orchestra was erected at the west end of the church and filled by nearly 300 performers. Rows of ascending seats occupied the chancel, accommodating a great number of listeners; and the coup d'œil presented by the brilliant assembly which filled the fine old church is described as most impressive. Madame Pasta, Madame Caradori, and the great tenor Mr. Braham, were among the soloists, and the conductor was Mr. Greatorex. The Festival opened with a The Leicester Musical Festival of 1827.

full Cathedral Service, followed by a selection of sacred music, "by permission of the Rev. Thos. Burnaby, Vicar, and the Rev. G. O. Fenwick, Lessee of the Chancel." In the evening a Concert was held in the New Assembly Rooms. The second morning performance consisted of a selection from the works of Haydn, Beethoven, Mozart and Handel, and an Evening Concert followed as before. On the third day Handel's masterpiece "The Messiah" was given, with Mozart's accompaniments; and at night a "dress and fancy Ball" closed the Festival. It had attracted large numbers of cultivated people from far and near, and in both a social and remunerative sense proved brilliantly successful. Out of the proceeds the sum of £1000 was handed over to the Infirmary;—a donation given to the Choral Society,—and gratuities in addition to their fees, to the principal artistes. Three hundred guineas was the fee paid to the celebrated Madame Pasta on this occasion.

The Hon. Medical Staff of the Infirmary.

It may here be mentioned, in connection with the Infirmary, for the benefit of which this historical Festival was held, that its honorary staff consisted then, as now, of the leading medical men of the town. Dr. Vaughan and Dr. Arnold, appointed in 1771, were its earliest physicians; and a son of the latter, Dr. William Arnold, afterwards held the same post for many years, Dr. Freer acting with him during part of the time. Dr. Shaw, Dr. Noble and Dr. Barclay followed, all honoured names in Leicester; and the line of highly-qualified and public-spirited men has remained unbroken to the present day. Of the surgeons the names of Thomas Paget, father and son, who faithfully served the Institution from 1797 to 1861 (the elder being the first surgeon appointed); of Mr. J. Nedham, Mr. T. Macaulay and

Mr. Benfield, all of whom come within the limit of our period, are remembered with well deserved respect and gratitude for their self-denying labours in the cause of the suffering poor.

The untimely death of Dr. Noble from cholera, while on a visit to Spain in 1861, deprived the town of an able and active-minded man who had long been instrumental in promoting its welfare in many and various directions. He lived at the well-remembered Danet's Hall, on the western outskirts of the town, and so called from the name of the family who owned the estate from the thirteenth to the seventeenth centuries. At the beginning of the eighteenth century this was purchased from descendants of the Danets by Mr. John Watts, who built a new Hall and died not long afterwards His grandson John Watts was the last of that family to reside there, for on his death in 1769 his widow sold the estate and retired with her daughter to a smaller house in Leicester. The latter lady was the accomplished Miss Susannah Watts who, among other literary works, wrote the interesting "Walk through Leicester," published in 1804. Danet's Hall now passed through several hands, but eventually came into the possession of Dr. Noble, who had married the daughter of one of his predecessors, Mr. Kershaw. The house was situated on the rising ground between the Bow Bridge and the Fosse Road, and was connected with the town by a narrow wooded road which was called "Watts's Causeway," and which long afterwards was widened into the present King Richard's Road. After the death of Dr. Noble the house and grounds were sold for building purposes; and thus Danet's Hall, with its ancient associations, and the famous Cherry Orchard which had yielded up its buried

Danet's Hall.

Roman art at the bidding of modern antiquarian research was swept away by the advancing hand of change and progress. Its site is now occupied by a still extending town of streets and shops.

"Westcotes." Another and more notable dwelling not far from Danet's Hall, and which has since met with a similar fate, was "Westcotes," formerly one of the Granges belonging to the Abbey of Leicester. In 1536 it was leased by the Abbot

"WESTCOTES."

and Convent to John Ruding, in whose family it remained, with the exception of one short interval, until the latter part of the eighteenth century. It then became the property of Mr. Thomas Freer, Clerk of the Peace for the County of Leicester, by whose son, Major Freer, it was afterwards sold to the late Mr. Joseph Harris. The front portion of this handsome and dignified dwelling, situated in its finely tim-

bered grounds at the angle of the Hinckley and Narborough Roads, and sheltered by tall elm trees, the abode of a busy rookery, was built about 1730; but parts of the back premises dated from the very early times when Westcotes Grange supplied the Abbey of Leicester with wheat and other farm produce.

It may here be stated that the two foregoing estates formed part of the district anciently called Bruntingthorpe or Bronkinsthorpe, (a Liberty of the Parish of St. Mary in Leicester,) originally divided into two portions called respectively "Westcotes," and "Walsh" or "Danet's Hall." The Walsh family preceded the Danets. Upon the enclosure of Leicester Forest in the days of Charles I., as Nichols tells us, 106 acres were allotted to the freeholders and cottagers of Bruntingthorpe; out of which 76 acres were given to Walter Ruding of Westcotes, and 25 to John Danet his neighbour.

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The New Hall in Wellington Street.

One of the material results of the strong feeling in party politics which existed in Leicester during the first half of the nineteenth century was the erection of the New Hall in Wellington Street in 1831. This was promoted by a section of the Liberal party in order to provide a place of meeting for its members, as the Tory Corporation declined to allow them the use of the Town Hall for this purpose. At first the New Hall, or "Wellington" or "Green" Rooms,—indicating the party colour,—was intended for political use only. But it soon suggested itself as a useful Hall for Concerts and other public occasions; and mainly through the wise and energetic action of Mr. Alfred Paget, a young musical amateur, a committee consisting of leading townsmen of

both political parties was formed, and a series of Subscription Concerts set on foot, which proved a workable bond of union, and a great social success. After each concert the Hall was cleared for dancing, while card-tables and refreshments occupied the smaller rooms. For one of these concerts the sevices of Madame Malibran, the greatest operatic singer of the day, were secured, when a large and fashionable audience from the town and county was present and, according to Mr. Gardiner, were so captivated by the singing of the prima donna that they were afterwards dissatisfied with the efforts of any other performer, however capable or talented. This series of Concerts was not continued for many seasons, but others took their place; and until the erection of the Temperance Hall in 1853 most of the best musical performances were held in the New Hall, besides Charity Bazaars, and entertainments of all kinds.

It seems uncertain whether a performance in Leicester by the great violinist Paganini in 1831 took place in the old Theatre or the New Hall, as this was not built until that year; but Franz Liszt played in the latter place in 1840; and many were the famous artistes who have appeared there. The writer well remembers the first appearance of Sims Reeves in Leicester at one of the Concerts given in this Hall by our accomplished local flautist and musical conductor, Mr. Henry Nicholson. To the last-named gentleman, as well as to his frequent colleague Miss Deacon, whose name will long be cherished in local musical circles, Leicester owes a deep debt of gratitude for their long-continued exertions in promoting the enjoyment and cultivation of music among all classes. Dating nearly from the time when he made his first public appearance under his father's bâton in the Duke

The Nicholson family.

of Rutland's band in 1836, at a Concert at the Cricket Ground, until comparatively recent years, Mr. Nicholson has been the successful organizer and conductor of the best public concerts in Leicester. As a performer on the flute he early won a national reputation; and his brother, the late Mr. Alfred Nicholson, was equally proficient on the oboe, and for many years was an esteemed member of the Orchestra of the Royal Italian Opera in London. A younger brother, Mr. Valentine Nicholson, a violinist, died early. Their father was Bandmaster of the Leicestershire Militia for some years previous to its disbandment after the great Napoleonic war; and the honorary Colonel of that regiment, —the fifth Duke of Rutland,—being unwilling to disperse the band, retained it for his private use until his death in 1857.* The "Duke's Band" was well-known and appreciated in Leicester as well as in the county, and it assisted on innumerable public occasions. The elder Mr. Nicholson had also formed the band of the Leicestershire Yeomanry Regiment in 1824, under Col. G. A. L. Keck, and he remained its Bandmaster till 1862, when his son Mr. Henry Nicholson was promoted to the office, and held it until 1905. Thus the father and son successively occupied the position of Bandmaster to the Leicestershire Yeomanry for a period of 81 years.

Mr. John Ella should also be mentioned as a prominent Mr. John Ella.

* When the Militia regiments were again embodied in 1855 during the Crimean War, Mr. Henry Nicholson formed a band for the Leicestershire Regiment, and took it under his charge for a time; but owing to his inability to accompany the Regiment to Aldershot the same winter, Herr Ptaçek was then appointed Bandmaster, and retained the office until 1867, when he resigned, and Mr. Nicholson resumed it and remained the conductor of the band until 1899.

local musician early in the century. He was a violinist and teacher of music, and lived in the house in the Market Place now occupied by Miss Crane. About 1825 he left Leicester for London, where he played in the best orchestras for many years. He became the well-known founder and Director of the London Musical Union, and in 1850 was still taking part in important performances both in London and in the provinces. His daughter, Miss Ella, was the organist at St. George's Church; in which capacity she was followed by Miss Wykes. It is somewhat singular that the organists at several of our principal Leicester churches during the middle of the nineteenth century were ladies; for Mrs. Scott, who was originally organist at St. Margaret's, afterwards presided for many years over the instrument at St. Martin's, formerly under the charge of Miss Greatorex; while Miss Deacon was for a long period the organist at St. Mary's.

The Mechanics' Institute.

A year or two after the erection of the New Hall a valuable effort was made towards the spread of education by the establishment of a Mechanics' Institute in the upper rooms of the same building. Here lectures were delivered to its members and, in addition, a library was stored which was available for the use of those who possessed but few books at home. In a smaller room chess-playing and other quiet amusements were encouraged, besides reading,—the object of the promoters being to impart a higher and more intellectual aim to the leisure hours of the young men of Leicester than was then prevalent. With this aim, many of the best educated men of the town became members, and by their loyal co-operation contributed largely to the success of the movement. This useful Institution was not closed until 1870,

when the building was adapted to the purpose of a Municipal Free Library.

The Leicester and Swannington Railway.

Science at this time was making important strides, and the minds and faculties of thinking men were stimulated to devise means for its practical application in various directions. Steam locomotion was the great achievement of the day; and to our town belongs the honour of completing the second railroad made in England, by the opening of the Leicester and Swannington line in July 1832. This had been constructed under the direction of the great George Stephenson and his son Robert; and with their names should be linked those of Mr. William Stenson and Mr. John Ellis who initiated,—and with other Leicestershire Colliery owners, largely financed,—the undertaking. Their object was mainly that of self-defence against the large supplies of Derbyshire coal brought to Leicester by the canal; and also of superseding the conveyance by road of their own coal from the Swannington district,—a tedious and costly method, and often cruelly burdensome to the animals employed on the rough and hilly roads to Leicester. Accommodation for a few passengers was also intended.

The opening of this railway was an inportant local event, and the novelty of its working is well indicated by a warning issued before the appointed day to all whom it might concern that "It is necessary that the line of rails should be kept clear." How the first train to Bagworth, driven by George Stephenson himself, started from the little Station at the West Bridge Coal Wharf, on that eventful 17th of July 1832, amid the ringing of church bells and the firing of cannon;—how a specially covered carriage conveyed the Directors seated on chairs borrowed from the Board Room,

while the general company were accommodated in the single open passenger carriage and ten new coal waggons across which were laid planks covered with green baize;—how a cannon placed on the last carriage was fired on approaching each wayside station as a signal for the village bells to peal forth;—how in mid-tunnel the engine chimney caught the low roof with an alarming shock,—and how, on safely issuing from the darkness and smoke the train was stopped to allow the company to alight and wash off the accumulated smuts in the adjacent Glenfield brook,—all forms quaint reading in the records of the time and the interesting narrative since published by Mr. Clement Stretton, C.E., our local expert upon railway history and mechanism, and whose valuable collection of specimens of early railway work now enriches the Town Museum.

IV.

THE REFORM AGITATION OF 1830-1835. THE NEW CORPORATION. CHARITY SCHOOLS IN LEICESTER. THE FREE GRAMMAR AND COLLEGIATE SCHOOL. THE PROPRIETARY SCHOOL.

The Reform Movement.

The movement for Reform, both parliamentary and municipal, which arose in the early part of the nineteenth century, now claims notice;—that strenuous period during which the Whigs, or Liberals, as they were now generally termed, were everywhere agitating for the amendment of certain anomalous

conditions in the parliamentary system; and also for an extension of the franchise, in order that more influence might accrue to the middle classes, and through them, that a wider representation in Parliament of the needs of the People might result. In Leicester the Puritan element has always been strong; and there had already long existed a party zealous for parliamentary reform; in addition to which a growing dissatisfaction was felt in the government of the town by an almost exclusively Tory Corporation, and an increasing impatience shown under certain resulting grievances. Among these, the practical control of parliamentary elections by the municipal body was strongly resented. At the general election in 1826, when efforts were beginning to be made by the Tories all over the kingdom to delay the already advancing Reform movement, the influence upon the eight days' Poll in Leicester of a number of non-resident voters specially created in the Tory interest and mainly at the municipal expense, roused great anger and excitement among the Liberal party and their followers, and serious rioting in the Market Place occurred.

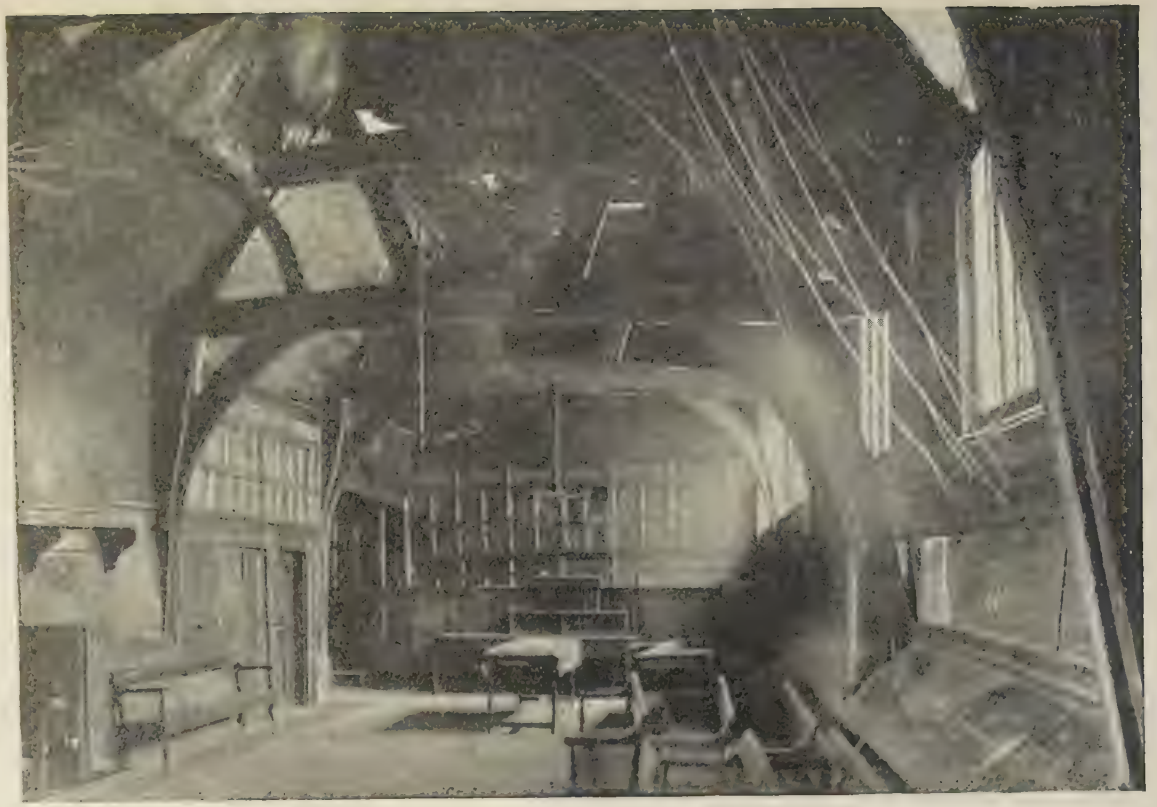
From that time forward, increasing efforts were made in this town to put an end to Tory monopoly in municipal affairs, and also to secure a hearing for the voice of the People in Parliament; and many local meetings were held to assist the national movement in the latter direction. Resolutions in favour of Parliamentary reform and in support of His Majesty's Ministers, who were then occupied in framing the great Reform Bill, were carried with enthusiasm. At the general election of 1831 the return of Liberal candidates for both the town and county of Leicester caused great satisfaction to their party. The newly-elected borough Members,

Messrs. Evans and Ellis, gave a public dinner at the Cricket Ground (situated behind the Spa Houses on the Humberstone Road), at which upwards of 3000 guests were entertained. The sight was witnessed by a great concourse of spectators, and the proceedings were enlivened with music supplied by an orchestra of 250 instrumental and vocal performers.

When, after more than one irritating delay, the Reform Bill was passed early in June 1832, great demonstrations of joy took place throughout the kingdom; and in Leicester processions, dinners, and illuminations celebrated the event. Tuesday, the 1st of August, was set apart as a day of public rejoicing; many shops were closed, and a Procession composed of members of the Reform Society and gentlemen on horseback, headed by 2000 boys with labels on their caps, and each wearing a medal and carrying a small flag, marched through the town, stirring the hearts of many of the inhabitants into an enthusiasm of patriotic feeling.

The Old Corporation.

It is now necessary to explain the fundamental cause of the agitation for local reform which followed the passing of the great Reform Bill, and which resulted in changes that form a distinct landmark in our local history. In 1835, and for long previous, the town affairs were administered by a self-elected Corporation. Until the reign of Henry VII. the power of municipal election had rested in the hands of the burgesses, but in 1489, owing to the contumacy of a few individuals, a charter had been granted authorising the Mayor and his brethren to choose their own Council of forty-eight commoners, thus depriving the burgesses of their ancient privilege. This arrangement had been adhered to ever since; and it may readily be understood that, as time went on, it had opened the door to much irregularity and



THE OLD TOWN HALL. (WEST END).

abuse. It was believed that unscrupulous use of their power and prestige had often been exercised, and questionable practices resorted to, by the Corporation, who were naturally tenacious of the rights and influence they had acquired during the past three centuries. Any attempt at interference with the constitution of the Town Council was therefore jealously watched and resented; while by the other party it was felt that among the needs for reform then pressing for public consideration, the reconstruction of local governing bodies, and of that of our own town in particular, was the most urgent.

In 1833 a largely attended meeting was held to discuss the subject, and the Resolution was adopted that "the self-elective system of a Corporation is a great hardship and a heavy grievance." In the same year Parliament appointed a Select Committee to inquire into the condition and usages of municipal bodies all over the kingdom; and two Commissioners were sent to Leicester to ascertain the past and present procedure of its Corporation. The Town Clerk was minutely examined, and after much trouble, involving the invited testimony of private individuals on account of the obstinate failure of the Town Clerk to produce the official accounts required by the Commissioners, many damaging facts were elicited,—among them, that town property had been mortgaged and a portion sold, the proceeds not having been properly accounted for. Proofs of grave maladministration of the funds of Sir Thomas White's Charity were also the result of a separate official investigation made soon afterwards. It was felt that constitutional changes were urgently needed; and the Reform party eagerly looked forward to imperial legislation on the subject.

The Municipal Reform Bill of 1835.

In July 1835, Lord John Russell's Bill for the better regulation of the Municipal Corporations of England and Wales was laid before Parliament, and another national contest between old customs and new proposals ensued. In Leicester many public meetings were held by the Reform party, and an address was sent to Lord John Russell in support of his measure; while the local adherents of the existing system declared themselves resolved to defend it at all costs. The passing of the Municipal Reform Bill was however, not long delayed, and it received the royal assent in September 1835.

As the Act was to come into operation on the 1st of January 1836, no time was to be lost in arranging for the municipal elections, which accordingly took place on the 26th of December, passing off quietly with the result of a large Liberal majority, which has ever since been maintained.

Two days afterwards the new Aldermen, fourteen in number, were elected by the Councillors. The unanimous choice of a Mayor fell upon Mr. Thomas Paget of Humberstone, who had taken a prominent part all through the Reform agitation; and he was again selected for the office upon the termination of the short mayoral year ending November 9th 1837.

The new Magistrates selected for recommendation by the Council, and duly placed on the Commission of the Peace for the Borough, were Messrs. T. Paget (Mayor), Issac Hodgson, Robert Brewin, John Oldacres, Thomas Stokes, Charles Inman. John Ryley, Thomas Paget (surgeon), Richard Wood, and John Biggs.

Mr. Samuel Stone, solicitor, was appointed to the office of Town Clerk, which he filled with conspicuous ability until 1872. His name is familiar throughout the legal and magisterial world as the author of "Stone's Justices' Manual," a

THE MAYOR'S PARLOUR IN THE OLD TOWN HALL.

work of extreme practical value, which has now gone through thirty-seven editions. Mr. Richard Toller was made Clerk of the Peace, and Mr. Samuel Kirby, Treasurer, for the Borough. The first of these held office during an unusually long and active life, and was universally respected and appreciated for his high principle and humorous geniality of disposition.

The Corporation Sale in 1836.

With the proverbial energy of "new brooms" the reformed Town Council of 1836 at once set to work to sweep away all that appeared to them unnecessary or obsolete under the old system; and within the first month of their taking office, not only the extensive paraphernalia of crockery, plate, glass, and cooking utensils needed for civic feasting, but also the ancient emblems of civic authority, had one and all disappeared under the auctioneer's hammer. It was a ruthless measure, but the desire of the Council was for a strictly plain and rigid administration; and the lavish expense incurred in the municipal festivities of the past, as well as the needless retention of what, in their eyes, seemed merely a childish symbolism, must be admitted as an excuse, in some degree, for their hasty act of confiscation. Modern opinion concedes the wisdom of having ended the civic convivialities of former days, which from the habit of the times had allowed excesses that society of all classes would now condemn; but it is greatly to be deplored, if only from an antiquarian point of view, that the ancient Insignia of the Corporation should have been spurned as useless, and sold to the highest public bidder. The Great Mace, of silver gilt, purchased by the Corporation of Leicester in 1649, to replace the one lost in the siege of the town four years before, was bought by the landlady of an Inn in Wharf Street for £85. The Sergeant's

Mace, of the date of Charles II., was sold for £16; and the three smaller maces together realised about £22. The two principal maces have since been recovered, and are once more used as acceptable adjuncts to the dignity of the mayoral office; the largest having been purchased by subscription from the then owner and presented to the Corporation in 1866; and the Sergeant's Mace being restored in 1876 by the public spirit and antiquarian interest of the late Mr. George Nevinson. In this memorable sale, which lasted six days, and realised nearly twelve hundred pounds, the musical instruments used by the six Town Waits, with their badges of office, were included.

A thorough enquiry into the number and salaries of the borough officials was now also made, and many retrenchments effected; a substantial sum being annually saved to the public by the abolition of the Mayor's salary, which Mr. Paget declined to receive, and which has never since been renewed. Several of the minor borough offices were entirely discontinued, such as that of the four Sergeants at Mace, two Bellmen, the Beadle, and the Corporation Mole-Catcher.

It may here be mentioned that the first election of a Board of Guardians of the Poor Law took place in Leicester in 1836, superseding the Vestries and Parish Overseers in the relief of the Poor.

Among the principal names associated with the cause of Reform in this national and local crisis were:—

Mr. Thomas Paget of Humberstone, Mayor in 1836-1837. (M.P. for the County in 1831.)

Mr. Robert Brewin ... Mayor in 1837.

Mr. Thomas Stokes ... „ 1838, 1841.

Mr. Joseph Whetstone ... „ 1839.

Mr. John Biggs ... Mayor in 1840, 1847, and 1855.
(M.P. for the Borough in 1856, 1857, and 1859.)
Mr. William Biggs ... Mayor in 1842, 1848, and 1859.
Mr. Joseph Fielding ... ,, 1846.

Mr. Samuel Stone (Town Clerk), the Rev. Charles Berry, the Rev. J. P. Mursell, Dr. Noble, Mr. Isaac Hodgson, and others.

The passing of the Reform Bill, in extending the electoral franchise, indirectly acted as a stimulus towards the improvement of education throughout the country; and a distinct movement in this direction now commenced in Leicester. With the exception of the old Free Grammar School we hear of no place of education in this town until a Day School was opened in 1708 in connection with the Great Meeting Presbyterian Chapel in Bond Street. This at first numbered only about twenty scholars, but it rose to be a very important school and educational influence in the town, ceasing only with the creation of the School Board under Mr. Forster's Education Act of 1870, and the undertaking of the means for elementary education by the ratepayers. Alderman Newton founded the Green Coat School about 1761; and this under greatly extended conditions still remains one of our most valued centres of education.

Schools existing in Leicester.

The Charity School of St. Mary's appears to have been the first parochial school in Leicester, and this was established mainly by the efforts of the then vicar, the Rev. Thomas Robinson, who had already for several years, assisted by subscriptions from his friends, clothed and educated fifty poor children of the parish. In 1785 he arranged for the conveyance of a certain piece of land in order to erect a Charity School for children from six to fourteen years of

Parochial Schools.

age. This was placed under the management of Trustees and Subscribers, who also nominated the scholars. Forty-five boys and thirty-five girls were at first accommodated, but the numbers soon increased. In the Leicester *Journal* of March 29th, 1788, we read that "the Charity School of St. Mary's, which we have frequently commended to the notice of our readers, continues in a very prosperous state." At a subscribers' meeting held previously "it appeared that the girls, besides attending to the other business of the school, had been diligently employed in sewing; the earnings of their work to be applied to the further advantage of this institution." In 1827 the Leicester Directory gives the numbers as eighty boys and forty girls, in addition to which one hundred girls and thirty boys were taught on Sundays. As many as the funds permitted were also clothed. These schools, it will be remembered, stood in what was called "The Hollow," near to the junction of Applegate Street with the West Bridge. The front of the building, which was placed at something like a right angle with the street, faced towards St. Mary's Church, and a vegetable garden lay before it. Prominent upon the main wall were the sculptured figures of a charity boy and girl clad in the school uniform of the period. These figures now adorn the front of the newer school building erected in 1869 upon an adjoining site nearer to the church.

St. Martin's, or the Blue Coat Charity Schools, were established a few years later; a building erected on the parish ground in Wycliffe Street being bought in 1790 as a Charity School for the teaching of boys and girls,—the boys to read and write,—the girls to read and work. This was supported by voluntary subscription, and managed by a committee of the subscribers. A greater or less number of the scholars were clothed each year, according to the state of the finances. In 1827, one hundred and fifty boys and eighty girls were in attendance.

St. Margaret's Schools.

St. Margaret's Charity School in Church Gate was erected in 1807, and in 1827 it educated seventy-three boys and forty-one girls, "besides ten of each sex on a Sunday."

St. Margaret's National School in Canning Place was built in 1834, and the Leicester Directory of 1849 gives its numbers as two hundred boys and one hundred girls.

All Saints' Schools.

In All Saints' parish, schools were established in Charlotte Street in 1819. A Sunday School was connected with it. In 1827 there were upwards of one hundred and sixty scholars. The site of these schools being needed for the construction of the Great Central Railway in 1899, they now occupy a new and spacious building in Vine Street.

St Nicholas' and the 'County" Schools.

The parish of St. Nicholas maintained a school, the whereabouts of which is not recorded, for some years previous to its union with the County National School erected in 1814 in the "Holy Bones," opposite to St. Nicholas' Church. This was established by the "County of Leicester Society for the Education of the Infant Poor in the principles of the Established Church," mainly as a central school for the instruction of teachers, male and female, for the surrounding villages. The Society, of which the Duke of Rutland was Patron, and the Bishop of Lincoln President, was maintained by sub-

scription throughout the county, and was governed by an annually-appointed Committee of twelve clergymen and twelve layman. The National Society in London contributed £300 towards the erection of the County School; the Mayor and Corporation of Leicester gave a donation of one hundred guineas, and collections were made for it in one hundred and seventy-four churches of the county.

St. George's and Christ Churches also supported Day Schools in due course.

It should be mentioned, in connection with the history of elementary education in Leicester, that about the middle of the nineteenth century the Rev. Canon Fry warmly took up its cause, and by his energy and devotion established and personally superintended several Church of England Schools in the town.

In the meantime the Nonconformists as a body had been slow in advancing the cause of secular education among the people; but in 1831, mainly through the exertion and influence of the Society of Friends and others, the British School for boys and girls was erected in Hill Street near the Humberstone Gate; and this remained for a long period a most important educational institution. After the establishment of Board Schools the British School was carried on for some time as a private enterprise.

The British School erected in 1831.

Before the year 1840 Infant Schools were also set on foot in Metcalfe Street, Oxford Street, Charlotte Street, and Archdeacon Lane. In 1849 a Girls' Day School was opened by the congregation of the Independent Chapel in Gallowtree Gate, who also largely supported a Day School for boys in Osborn Street. The Baptists, too, for a time maintained Day Schools which were afterwards discontinued.

Among the educational influences at work in Leicester in the middle of the last century must also be included the valuable evening classes for the instruction of men, boys, women and girls in elementary subjects, conducted by the Rev. Joseph Dare in a large room in what was called "All Saints' Open," opposite to that church in Highcross Street. Mr. Dare was the widely-respected agent of the Leicester Domestic Mission established in 1845 in connection with the Great Meeting Chapel. He held Divine Service in his Mission Room on Sundays, and on week days he was the "Minister to the Poor" in their own homes, visiting and helping them with advice and friendly sympathy, and occasionally with food, coals, or money. A man of large heart and of a singularly tender nature, his name is gratefully remembered by many now living who were taught in his classes, or who recall his visits to their parents. Another feature of the Mission was the afternoon sewing classes for girls, which several ladies regularly visited, also superintending the quarterly Sales of the garments made there. Mr. Dare's visits among the poor were of great public service by indirectly bringing under the notice of the town authorities or by means of his annual Reports, serious defects in housing or sanitation, or the desirability of more stringent police supervision in places or at times known to him through his familiar intercourse with the vicious, as well as the industrious, among the lower classes.

The Rev. Joseph Dare

Apart from these centres of educational effort, however, the number of elementary schools in Leicester continued lamentably inadequate until the latter part of the century, when Mr. Forster's Education Act of 1870 proved of immense benefit to the town by the creation of the School Board

and the gradual erection of efficient schools in every locality; thus bringing the advantages of a cheap education to the very doors of the working classes.

Secondary Education in Leicester,

In the interests of what would now be called Secondary Education, and apart from the private schools in Leicester, of which that of the Rev. Charles Berry, already mentioned, was the principal one during the first thirty years of the century, two important buildings were erected in the years 1836 and 1837, each of which subsequently passed into a different though not antagonistic use from that originally intended.

The Free Grammar School.

The old Grammar School, which had done excellent service in the town for more than two hundred and fifty years, and which in the middle of the eighteenth century had taught as many as three hundred boys, mostly sons of freemen, had shrunk to much smaller dimensions by the first part of the nineteenth; its numbers amounting only to some fifty day scholars and thirty boarders, who were lodged in the Head-master's house adjoining. In 1836 the School was fast falling into decay under an inefficient Head-master. The new Corporation refused the grant which had hitherto largely supported the School, and the remaining income was made over to the Trustees of Church Charities. The pupils dwindled down to less than half-a-dozen sons of freemen, and in 1841 the School was finally closed and the Master's House sold by the Corporation.

The Collegiate School.

In the year 1836, however, the Collegiate School in Prebend Street, a handsome building in the Gothic style, designed by Mr. Weightman of Sheffield and erected by a Company of shareholders, was opened for the education of boys under masters belonging to the Church of England. Its first Head-master was the Rev. E. T. Vaughan, Vicar of St.

Martin's parish, and he was followed by the Rev. Abraham Hill, Vicar of St. George's. Among the Assistant-masters of the Collegiate School was the since eminent biologist Mr. A. Russell Wallace, who afterwards, in company with our late well-known townsman and traveller Mr. H. Walter Bates, explored the banks of the river Amazon for the purpose of gathering facts of animal and insect life which might assist in throwing light upon the Origin of Species, a study then engaging their close attention.

In 1860, by arrangement with the Trustees of Church Charities, empowered since 1836 to deal with the income from the endowments of the Free Grammar School, boys nominated by them were received into the Collegiate School, Mr. Hill being at the same time appointed nominal Head-master of the Grammar School closed in 1841. The empty School-house in Highcross Street was now sold by the Trustees; and has for many years been occupied by the Messrs. Spurway as a carpet warehouse.

To connect the fortunes of the old Free Grammar School with the present time, it may be mentioned that upon the closing, in its turn, of the Collegiate School in 1866, the Trustees placed their scholars successively under the care and nominal Head-mastership of the Rev. J. Highton of Mill Hill School, London Road; and of the Rev. W. S. Matthews, who in 1871 commenced a school in Trinity Lane, Upper King Street. This gentleman left Leicester in 1877; and upon the opening of the Wyggeston School in that year the nominees of the Grammar School Trustees found a safe shelter within the walls of the new building in Southgate Street, under the excellent rule of its clever and successful Head-master the Rev. James Went, who is also Head-master

of the Free Grammar School. Under the scheme of the Charity Commissioners in 1890, the ancient endowment, with a portion of the "Hayne Trust," has been merged into one foundation, which has since been administered under the name of the "Leicester Scholarships and Exhibitions Endowment."*

SOUTHGATE STREET, WITH GABLED CONFRATERY OF WIGSTON'S HOSPITAL. (1840).
(*Site of present Wyggeston Boys' School*).

After the closing of the Collegiate School in 1866 the building was sold, and afterwards converted into the present Wycliff Congregational Church, which was opened in 1872.

* By a new Scheme now under consideration by the Board of Education it is suggested that the two amalgamated Schools shall in future be known as the "Wyggeston Grammar School," thus appropriately combining in name, as well as in work, the ancient and the modern foundations.

For the education of the sons of Nonconformists, and also, it is to be feared, somewhat in a spirit of rivalry with the Church, the imposing classical building on the New Walk was erected as a Proprietary School by another Company of shareholders, just one year after the establishment of the Collegiate School; the architect being Mr. Hanson, of Coventry. This was opened in 1837. For some years it was a successful and well-attended School under a staff of able Masters, comprising Mr. Cyrus Edmonds, Head-master; Mr. James Francis Hollings, Mr. Mitchell, Mr. T. F. Lee; and later on, Mr. G. Franklin and Mr. R. Waddington. But from various causes the School failed to realise the expectations of its promotors; and its members having greatly declined, it was discontinued in 1848. Not long afterwards the building was sold to the Leicester Corporation for conversion into a Town Museum.

The Proprietary School.

The most gifted of the Masters of the Proprietary School was unquestionably Mr. James Francis Hollings. He was a stranger to Leicester until the year 1837; but until his death in middle age he was a highly-valued citizen, contributing greatly to its social and intellectual life. Mr. Hollings was remarkable both for his scientific and literary knowledge; an elegant classical scholar, a deep thinker, and a brilliant lecturer. He took a keen interest in the past history of Leicester, and by his writings and Addresses added much to our knowledge of some of its episodes. He was actively interested in the Mechanics' Institute, and a highly-valued member of the Literary and Philosophical Society. After the closing of the Proprietary School he had more leisure to devote to his favourite pursuits, and he also filled the office of Mayor in 1859. His death in middle age was universally

Mr. James Francis Hollings.

lamented; and an ornamental stone column in the Museum Grounds was erected by his many friends to commemorate his life and public services in the town of Leicester.

Mr. Franklin.

Mr. Franklin, another of the most respected Masters of the Proprietary School, afterwards resumed the charge of the private school in Leicester which he had opened on his arrival here from his native city of Coventry, and which became the training place of many able and useful citizens; and his rare personal qualities, combined with his fine scholarship and singularly gentle and courteous demeanour, will be long remembered by all who knew him.

V

ROYAL VISITS TO LEICESTER. THE LITERARY AND PHILOSOPHICAL SOCIETY. THE PERMANENT LIBRARY AND NEWS ROOM. PLACES OF AMUSEMENT. THE RACES. OPENING OF THE MIDLAND RAILWAY. THE PENNY POST. STREET ASPECTS AND IMPROVEMENTS.

The Coronation of Queen Victoria June 28th 1838.

As illustrating the democratic spirit which ruled the New Corporation in its early days, it may be noticed that at the time of the Coronation of the young Queen Victoria, on June 28th 1838, there was a marked absence of official readiness to celebrate the event by public festivities of any importance. The neighbouring villages and market towns are recorded as exhibiting a far more loyal spirit. The chief demonstration which took place in Leicester on the occasion was an assembly of Charity School children who, to the number of about

4000, attended a service in St. Martin's Church, and afterwards marched to the Market Place, where they joined other schools, and all sang the National Anthem. They then dispersed, and were provided with dinner at their respective school-rooms. In the evening, however, several fire balloons were sent up from different parts of the town, and two fine transparencies of Her Majesty were exhibited at the Lion and Lamb and Bell Hotels. A gratuitous display of fireworks, supplied, as the *Journal* significantly remarks, by the Tories, also took place from the Cricket Ground ; and a Ball was held at the Assembly Rooms, which was attended almost entirely by the Tory families. A few private entertainments to workpeople were also given ; and a pleasant little paragraph subsequently appears in the *Journal* conveying the thanks of the debtors confined in the County Gaol to Sir E. Cradock Hartopp, Bart., for the excellent dinner of beef and plum-pudding provided for them on Coronation Day.

Visit of Queen Adelaide to Leicester 1839.

Neither was any official recognition accorded to the dowager Queen Adelaide, the next year, when she drove through Leicester on her way from Gopsall to Belvoir ; though the townspeople showed their loyalty by decorating the streets and houses, and assembling in crowds to greet her. When the Queen, escorted by Lord Howe, arrived at the entrance to the town from the Hinckley Road, she was received by some hundreds of horsemen and carriages, drawn up on each side of the roadway ; and these followed in procession through the town. In St. Nicholas' Churchyard the children from the Church Schools of Leicester were assembled to sing the National Anthem, each child holding a small flag inscribed with the name of its school. Through High Street, the Market Place, Hotel Street and Horsefair Street, under

evergreen arches, and amid cheering crowds, Queen Adelaide proceeded to the Three Crowns Hotel, in front of which was a platform filled, like the surrounding windows and balconies, with gaily-dressed ladies; while an open space beyond was kept clear by the police and a detachment of the Yeomanry. While the horses were changed, the senior boy of the Collegiate School was presented by the Head-master, and delivered a short address in Latin to Her Majesty, after which a week's extension of the half-year's holiday was announced. The preparations completed, the cortêge moved off down Belgrave Gate, at the further end of which the Queen again passed through the lines of the retiring escort, and proceeded on her journey to Belvoir. At this time party feeling was still running high; and an unworthy jealousy was felt among the Liberals on account of the supposed leaning of the Queen Dowager towards the Tory interest; so that in the newspaper reports of the day's proceedings, while the Tory organ painted the event in glowing colours, the Liberal papers described and ridiculed it as tame and spiritless in the highest degree.

Queen Victoria and Prince Albert pass through Leicester, Dec. 1843.

By the time, however, that Royalty next visited Leicester, the most hearty and genuine goodwill prevailed in all quarters. Early in December 1843 Queen Victoria and Prince Albert made a visiting tour in the Midlands, and on their return journey drove through Leicester from Belvoir to take train to London from the Midland Railway Station. Loyal addresses from the Town Council and also from the Freemen of Leicester had been presented by the Mayor at Belvoir Castle the preceding day; and on December 7th, great preparations having been made to receive them by an official decoration Committee, as well as by private citizens, the

Queen and Prince drove into Leicester through an imposing Tudor archway erected at the lower end of Belgrave Gate, and were welcomed by a cheering crowd, which closed in and followed the cavalcade through the town. Between the Three Crowns and the end of Belvoir Street three very handsome evergreen arches had been raised; flags and decorations everywhere met the eye; and the windows and points of vantage were filled to the utmost with eager spectators. At the entrance to Campbell Street another archway was placed, and beyond it rose a platform holding some 7000 school children, who vigorously added their shrill note of welcome. At the Station itself, which was profusely decorated and filled with privileged ticket-holders, the Mayor and Magistrates, with the Directors of the Midland Railway, formally received the royal visitors. After partaking of a choice luncheon provided by Mr. Boyer of the Bell Hotel, they were conducted to their seats in the train, which presently steamed away amid parting cheers,—and thus the royal visit was concluded. Not so the festivities, however, for the town was in general holiday: public dinners were held at the Three Crowns and the Bell Hotels; private entertainments were numerous; and street illuminations charmed the crowds of strolling sightseers until a late hour.

As a curious feature of early railway times, it should be mentioned that on this occasion the Queen and Prince, besides the Duke of Wellington, who accompanied them in the train, travelled in their own private carriages placed on railway trucks, instead of as now, occupying those provided by the Company. It was not uncommon, for some years after the opening of railways, for people of position to travel seated in their own carriages.

The Literary and Philosophical Society.

It may now be interesting to trace the growth of an institution which has long been associated with the intellectual life of our town, and which, having its origin in the period we are now considering, seems in a social and personal sense to connect the Leicester of to-day with that of seventy years ago.

In 1835 a meeting was held in a room in High Street,—the library of the Medical Society, itself founded in 1800,—with the object of forming a Literary and Philosophical Society which should provide lectures and subjects for discussion at evening meetings of the more cultivated townspeople. Among the dozen or so of active-minded men who were interested in the scheme Dr. Shaw and Mr. Alfred Paget took the lead. Besides the periodical reading of Papers on literary and scientific subjects, the Society aimed at forming a museum and a library of scientific works. The preliminaries arranged, Dr. Shaw consented to undertake the office of President for the first season. The meetings, which at the beginning did not include ladies, were for a time held in a large room in the house of Mr. T. Moxon in High Street; but they were destined to be migratory, for the Society successively met for short periods at the Midland Counties Fire Office in Welford Place; at the long room at the Amphitheatre in Humberstone Gate; at the Exchange in the Market Place, and at the Town Hall. In 1849 the Lecture Room at the Town Museum became its meeting-place for many years prior to the erection of the present Art Gallery, in which the gatherings have now long been held.

Among the names associated with the early days of the Literary and Philosophical Society, besides its two initiators already mentioned, are these of Mr. William Gardiner; the

Hon. and Rev. H. D. Erskine; Mr. John Ryley; Mr. Thomas Smith; Mr. Thomas Marshall; Mr. Alfred Burgess; Mr. William Biggs; the Rev. A. Irvine; the Rev. Charles Berry; the Rev. John Brown; Mr. J. H. Stallard; Mons. C. C. Caillard; Mr. James Williamson; Mr. G. J. Merewether; Mr. Frederick Mott; Mr. W. Napier Reeve; Dr. Barclay; and others holding a respected position in the town, and taking a genuine interest in its intellectual life. All but one of these have since passed away, but they have been followed by a long succession of cultivated men who have either occupied the Presidential chair, regularly attended the lectures, or joined one or more of the Sections which are now associated with the parent Society.

The Museum, which formed part of the original project, was slow in forming; but in course of time objects of interest and curiosity were sent to the Society, and the little collection was placed in a small room at the New Hall, below those occupied by the Mechanics' Institute. A curator was appointed, and the public were admitted free on certain days of the week. This arrangement lasted until the opening of the Town Museum in 1849.

Trinity Church opened 1838, and Christ Church in 1839.

In addition to the erection of the Collegiate and Proprietary Schools before alluded to, Leicester was enriched, between the years 1836 and 1840, by several important buildings. Trinity Church was opened for worship in 1838, and Christ Church in 1839, which indicates the needs of the growing population and of the extending residential area. The Union Workhouse in Sparkenhoe Street was also built in 1838 from plans by Mr. William Flint, a highly respected local architect; but it occasioned much hostile criticism from its size and cost in erection.

The General News Room and Permanent Library built in 1838.

The General News Room and Library was also built in 1838, from designs by Mr. Flint. It should here be mentioned that after the destruction by fire in 1795 of the first Permanent Library, on the premises of Mr. Richard Phillips in Gallowtree Gate, five years elapsed before any steps were

THE GENERAL NEWS ROOM. (*Demolished at the end of the 19th Century*)

taken for its re-establishment. In 1800, however, Mr. Thomas Combe, a bookseller in Cheapside, Market Place, invited public co-operation in forming a new Permanent Library. Interest was awakened, a subscription list was opened, and a Committee was appointed, Mr. Combe himself undertaking the

duties of Librarian and Secretary to the new Institution. Two years afterwards he transferred his business and the Library to the premises of the "Hotel" or Assembly Rooms, where it remained until 1817. At that time he removed to the well-remembered roomy shop in Gallowtree Gate, occupied for many years by the firm of Combe and Crossley, the site of which is now absorbed in the handsome modern premises of Messrs. T. Cooke and Son, and partly devoted to the bookselling business of Messrs. Clarke and Satchell. Here the Library was located till 1838. The proposal then made by the proprietors of the General News Room,—at that time just completed,—that the Permanent Library should be united with their Institution was accepted, and on January 1st 1839 the two Societies entered upon their joint occupation of the new and handsome building at the corner of Granby and Belvoir Streets. For a long period its classical frieze and portico lent dignity to one of the most prominent sites in the town; and when, a few years ago, the increasing street traffic rendered its removal necessary for widening the thoroughfare, its loss was keenly regretted by many who had been familiar with it from childhood.

Between the years 1840 and 1850 there appears to have been an institution in Leicester called the Athenæum, which occupied part of the front of the Theatre premises in Horse-fair Street. Here a reading-room was supplied with daily and weekly papers and periodicals. The experiment, however, was but short lived, though in 1849 it was spoken of as promising.

The places of amusement in Leicester during the first half of the nineteenth century now claim notice. The County

The Old Cricket Ground.

Cricket Ground, situated in the rear of the Spa* Houses in the Humberstone Gate appears to have been laid out and used for matches many years before the end of the eighteenth century. After undergoing alteration, and with the addition of a bowling-green, it was re-opened under new regulations in 1826, as we learn from the Leicester *Journal* of April 21st of that year; and it continued in use for cricket and for occasions of public gathering and amusement until the sale of the ground for building purposes about the year 1866. Subscription Pony Races were held there for many years, and were duly advertised in the local journals, with particulars of winners' cups and sweepstakes, and steward's regulations. Balloon ascents were frequently made from its ample area; those best remembered being by Mr. Green in his famous Nassau and Victoria balloons. All through the period we are now glancing at, the Pensioners, who were more than once a useful addition to the police in riotous times, were also regularly drilled there; and from 1860 it was used as a parade-ground by the newly-enrolled Rifle Volunteers. During the May and October Fairs in the Humberstone Gate evening amusements and displays of fireworks took place in its enclosure; and the abandonment of the familiar Cricket Ground as a public outdoor resort was widely felt and regretted in the town, although in course of time its loss was more than replaced by the beautiful Parks which are now so great an ornament to Leicester.

* In the beginning of June 1793, and at the same season in the next year, an advertisement appears in the Leicester *Herald* calling attention to the beneficial waters of the Leicester Spa, which "are now in high perfection" for drinking and bathing purposes. The terms by the day or season for "hot, temperate, or cold baths," are to be had on application at the Pump Room. How long these waters remained in use is not on record.

As mentioned in a former chapter, the Assembly Rooms in the Haymarket had served the purpose of a theatre as well as a concert and ball-room until the end of the eighteenth century, and dramatic performances in 1793 and 1794 are advertised to take place there as the so-called "Leicester Theatre." In the year 1800, however, a Theatre was built and opened on part of the site occupied by the present one, but it fronted the entrance to the Market Place; and the building did not extend back into Horsefair Street, as now. In December 1812, the Leicester *Chronicle* announces "Mr. William M'Cready's night." This was the father of the more celebrated tragedian, and at that time he was Manager of the Theatre. "Tickets and places for the boxes to be taken at Mr. Johnson's fruit shop, upper end of the Market Place. Doors open at half-past five, performance to begin at six." The play was "Mahomet the Imposter." In that Theatre Edmund Kean, the elder Matthews, and the great Macready played; and the last Manager before its demolition was Mr. James Anderson, the eminent tragedian.

The Old Theatre.

The present Theatre Royal was built from plans by Mr. William Parsons, architect and county surveyor, and was opened in 1836. Among the celebrities who appeared upon its stage in early days were Messrs. W. Farren, Macready, Charles Kean and his wife (Miss Ellen Tree), the Misses Cushman, Barry Sullivan, and many others. The Theatre season at that time was much shorter than now. It commenced with the Annual Race Week in September, and lasted until the end of January, with another short season of four weeks at Easter. The building however, was available at other times for public purposes; and many important political meetings were held there in the troubled years between 1840 and 1849.

The Theatre Royal.

The Race Week.

The "Races," held on the first Wednesday and Thursday in September, formed an important public and social event in Leicester; and as the occasion was a usual one for holidays and family meetings the town during the Race Week was thronged with country visitors of all classes. At the head of these was the Duke of Rutland, who took a prominent part in the festive programme, and whose private band, constantly in attendance under the conductorship of the elder Mr. Nicholson, contributed greatly to the general enjoyment. Less betting, but more pleasure-seeking, and unhappily far more drinking, took place on the Race-course then than now,—the line of refreshment booths extending a great way on both sides of the old Grand Stand and enclosure. The Earl of Stamford was at one time an important figure at the Leicester Races, and it was an annual amusement for many quiet folks to sit in a window on the London Road and watch for his coach and four and for "The Duke's" four-horsed barouche with postillions to pass by among the heterogeneous stream of vehicles and pedestrians en route for the Race-course,—now the Victoria Park.

On one of the evenings during the Race Week a fashionable Ball took place at the Assembly Rooms in aid of the Infirmary; and as a close to the week's festivities a Service was held on the Friday at St. Martin's Church, when a collection for the same Institution was taken on plates held by visitors of rank,—often ladies.

The first Manager of the Theatre Royal had been a Mr. James Monro, who took it on lease for three years, with the understanding that if by that time his expectations were not realised, he should have the option of a second lease at a reduced rent. A dispute arising over the matter at the

end of the first lease, another manager was installed by the directors, which so annoyed the friends of Mr. Monro that they at once took steps to provide a rival House. Ground was secured and a new building quickly put up, which they named the New Amphitheatre. This was a capacious but not very substantial erection fronting the Humberstone Gate, and nearly on the site of the present Tramway Offices, but principally occupying ground at the back, formerly a wood-yard. It consisted of a large theatre and circus combined, with boxes and gallery, and a stage twice the size of that of the Theatre Royal. Below was stabling for a hundred horses. The Amphitheatre was built at a cost of £8000, and was capable of holding 3000 persons when the circus was boarded over. The frontage towards Humberstone Gate was insignificant, but this part contained a large room and one or two smaller apartments, known as the "Shakesperian Rooms," where private theatricals, small meetings, and entertainments took place. The then well-known dancing master Mr. Bland also held his classes there for a time.

The Amphitheatre.

The Amphitheatre was opened in 1839 or 1840 with Ducrow's Circus from Astley's, when "Mazeppa" was represented, to the delight of a crowded assembly. This was followed by a succession of varied performances; and the new place of entertainment at first proved a formidable rival to the Theatre Royal. But the building was heavily mortgaged, and as a speculation it ultimately failed. In 1843 its mortgagees foreclosed, and it was offered for sale. Not finding a purchaser, however, it was kept open and used for all kinds of purposes, political as well as social, until 1848, when it was pulled down and sold in lots by auction, much below its original cost. During its short existence it had been occu-

pied for a time by Van. Amburgh's and Batty's Circuses; and among the Concerts held there was one given by the great tenor singer Mr. Braham, and his three sons. It was also the scene of large political meetings, panoramas, boxing displays, exhibitions of living statuary, and various other entertainments. In 1846 Mr. Henry Nicholson utilized it for a series of Promenade Concerts, the pit and circus being boarded over. The building was never really finished; the wooden fronts of the boxes and gallery not being even planed smooth; though some attempt at decoration was made by rough colouring in distemper.

The Midland Railway opened to Leicester in 1840.

We have now arrived at a very important episode in the history and development of Leicester. On the 5th May 1840 the Midland Railway was opened for traffic between Leicester and Derby, and also by Trent from Nottingham to Leicester; and on July 1st it was opened from Leicester to Rugby, and communication with London completed by route of the London and Birmingham line to Euston Terminus. This may be regarded as the starting point of modern commercial progress here as in other places, and it is a mere truism to say that the development of steam locomotion during the last sixty or seventy years has effected a more complete transformation in the conditions of life than any previous invention which applied science has brought about. The canals had done noble duty for many years as a means of transit for heavy goods, but with the advent of railways their decline commenced; and now, though not unlikely to revive under new conditions and at no very distant date, they have long been regarded as of secondary importance in the internal traffic of this country. That the novel method of travelling was quickly made popular is shown by the fact that within a

month after the opening a special train from Nottingham brought over a large number of people to visit an Exhibition at the Mechanics' Institute; and that a few days later a similar journey to Nottingham was made by Leicester folk, thus at once establishing an easier and more speedy communication between the sister towns. The Exhibition referred to was open for several weeks in 1840, and seems to have consisted of a large and really remarkable collection of objects of Art and general interest;—especially so when the comparative difficulty of transport at that time is considered. The Exhibition was also enlivened by Concerts of vocal and instrumental music, in which the Duke of Rutland's Band took a prominent part.

The project of running excursion trains at cheap fares was even in these early days dawning in the mind of our celebrated fellow-townsman Mr. Thomas Cook; for he arranged and personally conducted his first excursion (to Loughborough) on the 5th July 1841. It was not until many years later that his system was developed to any great extent; but he gradually became known to all the world as the successful organiser of popular home and foreign travel; an undertaking which has conferred health and pleasure upon multitudes of his countrymen and women, and which has probably made his name and that of his son the late Mr. John M. Cook more familiar both on the Continent and in remote corners of the earth than that of any other Englishmen below the rank of royalty. Mr. Thomas Cook died in 1892, deservedly respected both for his enterprise in travel and for his untiring labours in the cause of Temperance.

Mr. Thomas Cook.

To the development of railway communication must be mainly attributed an almost equally valuable institution of

The Penny Post established in 1840.

the nineteenth century, and one warmly welcomed by the whole of the British Isles. The establishment of the penny Post in 1840 was a blessing to society which many of us forget sufficiently to appreciate, amidst the multitude of facilities and inventions that enrich our modern life. This was brought about, as we all know, by the repeated efforts of Mr., afterwards Sir, Rowland Hill, who at length succeeded in convincing the Government of his day that a great reduction in the cost of letter postage would benefit, instead of decrease, the revenue. Previous to this beneficient change the cost of postage, which was paid upon the receipt and not, as now, upon the despatch of a letter, varied from under sixpence to one and fourpence, according to distance; and it need scarcely be said that letter-writing was a luxury mostly confined to the upper classes, except on special occasions. It was possible, however, to avoid the cost of postage if the sender were fortunate enough to obtain the signature upon the letter of a Member of Parliament; and this system of "franking," as it was called, was largely resorted to, although at the cost of much trouble and delay.

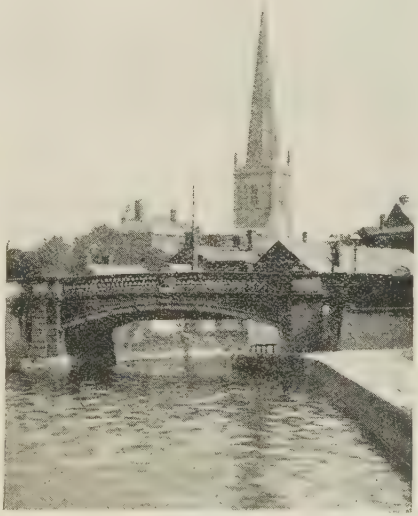
The earliest Post Office in Leicester of which we have any knowledge was in Granby Street, at the corner of Granby Place, and is within the recollection of but few persons now living. It was afterwards removed to the wide entrance into Halford Street (just beyond Mr. Williams' present china shop), where it was managed by two elderly ladies, and where the writer faintly remembers its exceedingly modest dimensions. In 1847 it was transferred to premises at a short distance on the opposite side of Granby Street, near to the spot where the Granby Coffee House now stands; and here it remained, enlarged from time to time as its business in-

creased, until removed to its present site somewhat nearer Belvoir Street. This was formerly occupied by a hosiery warehouse built by the late Mr. Thomas Corah, which preceded the handsome and extensive premises in another quarter of the town now owned by the sons of the latter, and known as St. Margaret's Works.

The letter-carriers, as they were called, were few in number, and their duties light. They wore no uniform until 1858. The letters were usually written on a large double sheet which was folded over for the address. Of envelope there was none, and sealing wax or a coloured wafer secured the contents.

The electric telegraph.

The electric telegraph, to which modern civilisation owes an untold debt of gratitude, was not introduced into Leicester until many years after Professor Wheatstone and Mr. Cook took out their patent in 1837. Singularly enough, the American Professor Morse struck upon the same idea in the same year, and State aid being refused him in his own country he applied for a patent in England; but our native inventors had been beforehand in the application of the discovery.



CANAL. WEST BRIDGE AND ST. MARY'S IN 1860. (*See next page*).

More than one important street alteration took place in Leicester in 1841. The old Conduit in the Market Place was taken down, and an iron column with a lamp on the top erected in its stead, as related in a former chapter. The Victoria Parade close by was not made and opened until 1847.

The ancient West Bridge, with its three arches and long disused chapel, which had survived from early mediæval times, was now found narrow and inadequate, and was accordingly pulled down and replaced by a cast-iron bridge of a single span, with balustrades typical of the period; and which, in its turn, has now given way to the present larger and more elaborate structure which crosses the river.

Floods in Leicester.

At this time no adequate or systematic effort had yet been made to cope with the periodical floods which created havoc and spread disease in this and other low lying parts of the town, although the construction of the canal in 1794 had partially alleviated their former disastrous extent. Until the latter half of the nineteenth century most serious discomfort and absolute misery were caused to the inmates of houses in these parts, their lower rooms being frequently inundated, and remaining damp and unhealthy for weeks afterwards. Traffic across the flooded space could only be carried on by a boat or cart and horse; and the curiosity and amusement manifested by those who came to view the scene was often in vivid contrast with the distressed aspect of the householders visible at their upper windows. It was usual for dwellers in such districts to provide themselves with a sliding board which could be inserted in their doorway at such times to check the flow of water from the street into their houses,* but these efforts were only partially successful,

* Boards such as these were also used in the doorways of town cottages to prevent the children from straying into the street.

LEICESTER MARKET PLACE. 1840.

and rheumatism and ague were prevalent in all such localities until a series of the most extensive and scientific works, carried out under the anxious supervision of the Chairmen of the several Committees of the Town Council entrusted with the matter have at length successfully combated these dreaded seasons of flood. In the appreciative words of Mr. John Storey, who held the office of Town Clerk during this strenuous period, the undertaking was "a monument of the courage and enterprise of the Council of Leicester; having involved a cost altogether of about £300,000, exclusive of the £15,000 expended in the western district in Roads and Bridges. The duties were delegated to the 'Highway and Sewerage Committee,' the 'Engineering Works Committee,' and the 'Floods Prevention Committee' alternately. The devotion and valuable services of these Committees, and of their capable Chairmen, the late Alderman Winterton, Mr. H. T. (then Alderman) Chambers, and (the late) Alderman Underwood, have elicited much admiration and are worthy of record."

Street aspects.

Towards the middle of the nineteenth century the aspect of the Leicester streets was beginning to lose something of its former quaintness, although many of the old features remained. In the houses and shops projecting windows were common, but the greater number were flat and comparatively narrow, and all were filled with small panes of thin glass, giving rise to the constant presence of the glazier about the streets, carrying in a frame on his back a supply of glass for mending broken windows. The repeal of the window-tax, which did not take place until July 1851, together with the cheapening of plate-glass, has since made a most welcome and healthful change in the dwelling-houses of all classes.

The improvement of the foot-pavement is also a source of comfort in modern times to which our fathers even in the middle of the last century were strangers. Flag-stones were used in the Market Place and a few of the principal streets, but the sidewalks in most of the smaller thoroughfares were paved with the uneven and pointed stones known and execrated as "petrified kidneys." These were superseded in time by square granite sets,—a great improvement,—but incomparably inferior to the excellent Victoria stone which now renders walking, in this and most other towns, so easy and pleasant.

Here and there, in the back or outer parts of the town, the remnant of a mud wall might still be seen;—notably in Butt Close Lane, out of Church Gate, the boundary of the ancient enclosure of the Shooting Butts; and from the numerous bee-holes which dotted their surface the mischievous street-loafers found an idle and cruel amusement in "bee-pegging," *i. e.* closing up the aperture with a peg, and listening to the angry hum of the imprisoned insect within.

Order was kept in the streets by a few constables, and the Leicester Directory of 1827 gives the names of nine watchmen, each of whom patrolled a given district; and the watch-box standing in Granby Street opposite the present Post Office prior to the year 1836 is still remembered by our oldest inhabitants. With the advent of the new Corporation in that year a regular police force of thirty or forty men, under a Superintendent and several sergeants, was established, whose still familiar sobriquet of "Bobbies" and "Peelers," arose from the name of Sir Robert Peel, the Minister who had originated the modern police system in London a few years earlier.

The Police Force established in 1836.

Coaches running through Leicester.

Until about the year 1840 the coaching system remained at its height; and the rattle of the heavy vehicles over the uneven stones was a noise rarely absent from the ears of the town dwellers. Above every Inn-door swung the heavy wooden signboard of the house; and the yards of the Hotels and Posting Houses presented a busy scene during the greater part of each twenty-four hours, for coaches ran through, or started from Leicester at almost every hour of the day and night. By a newspaper advertisement in 1836 we learn that no fewer than between thirty to forty coaches then daily left the Stag and Pheasant Inn, alone. The George Inn also in the same year advertises a daily service of sixteen; and the Three Crowns and Three Cranes,—the latter of which seems to have been removed from the Gallowtree Gate to the Humberstone Gate early in the nineteenth century,—besides other coach offices, doubtless had each their own service of coaches.

In the streets the town crier with his bell was a familiar figure up to the middle of the century. Milk for sale was still carried about in pails hanging from wooden shoulder-yokes; and street hawkers of small articles for household use were very numerous in all the thoroughfares. Little carts drawn by one or a pair of dogs were common, often containing pedlar's goods, but sometimes used as means of transit for long distances; and men were now and then prosecuted and fined for driving them at a furious pace,—an abuse which probably led to their ultimate suppression in the cause of humanity towards helpless creatures.

The abolition of climbing chimney sweeps.

Another and still more important step in the latter direction was the abolition in Leicester of climbing boys as chimney-sweeps. This was effected mainly through the efforts of Mr.

Edward Shipley Ellis, active in all directions of public and philanthropic work, and whose family, in its wide extending branches, is still identified with every local effort making for the public good. As early as 1812 the Leicester *Chronicle* calls attention to the abuses resulting from the employment of young boys as chimney sweeps, and to the necessity not only of enforcing the regulations of the Act of Parliament of 1789 for protecting these unfortunate children in their cruel and dangerous work, one of the provisions of which was that no boy *under eight years of age* should be made to climb chimneys,—but of superseding it by some other and more humane method. A Statute regulating the trade, the apprenticeship of children, the construction of flues, &c., was passed in 1834; and in 1842 it was further made illegal for master-sweeps to take apprentices under sixteen years of age. But still the practice continued, the magistrates failed to enforce the regulations, and householders and others continued to shut their eyes to the possibility of having their chimneys properly cleaned in any other way. Not till about 1850 was it finally abandoned in Leicester; for it was not uncommon until that time for passengers in the streets to be startled by the shrill cry of "sweep, sweep," from a chimney top; and to see a waving brush or scraper and a little black head and arms emerging for a moment into the fresh air before descending to terra firma. Mr. Ellis gave point to his successful efforts on behalf of the chimney boys, and encouragement to the master sweeps, not only by the threat of prosecution, but also by presenting each one of the latter with a machine sweeping-brush, on the promise that he would no longer employ children in his trade.

The May-day celebration of the sweeps in Leicester was

much looked forward to, when companies of them, adorned with aprons and head-gear of coloured calico and flowers,—brush and pan in hand, and headed by a "Jack in the Green" paraded the streets and danced in a ring for coppers.

May day sweeps and "Plough Monday,"

The "Plough Monday" rejoicings on the second Monday in January was also a well-remembered annual feature, when groups of bedizened yokels, with reddened faces, and grotesquely clothed, performed a rough dance in the streets and presented a money box with much uncouth urgency.

VI.

THE ANTI-CORN LAW CRUSADE. THE CHARTIST MOVEMENT. THE LOCAL CHURCH RATE AGITATION. THE CHARTIST RIOTS. LOCAL IMPROVEMENTS. PUBLIC MEN.

The Corn-Law Agitation.

The period between the years 1836 and 1849 was stormy and unsettled. The agitation for the repeal of the Corn Laws; the unrest and disturbances caused by the Chartist movement; and the widespread poverty following the continued depression of trade kept the whole country in a restless and unhappy condition. Bad harvests and the consequent dearness of bread entailed much hardship upon the Poor. In 1838 a severe trade crisis in Lancashire roused the people of the North to a state of active discontent; and an agitation for the repeal of the duty on imported wheat was organised under the name of the Anti-Corn-Law-League. This Society had its headquarters in Manchester, and for its

leaders the honoured names of Cobden, Bright and Villiers. The whole kingdom was presently stirred in its behalf by means of lectures, meetings, and printed matter. In 1840 several lectures on the subject were given at the Theatre in Leicester; and a large town's meeting was held at the same place,—the movement being earnestly taken up among all classes; and many means were resorted to for obtaining money for the purposes of the League.

Meanwhile, the poverty and distress in this town arising from the slackness of trade was increasing. In 1847 one fifth of the population was in receipt of relief;—the poor-rates were enormous;—and to prevent their rising further, a public subscription was opened, and a Committee appointed to distribute the fund in the form of food and fuel. The appeal was well responded to, and a sum amounting to about £2000 being raised, it was possible to give temporary relief to a great number of distressed families.

The Chartist Movement.

Unfortunately in Leicester, as well as in other places, the general agitation was complicated by the action of another body of would-be reformers who, in pursuit of their own object, hindered the cause of the Free Traders. This was the famous Chartist movement, which originated in 1837 or somewhat earlier in consequence, it is said, of an impression among the working classes that the Liberal leaders in Parliament did not intend to introduce any further measures of reform. As times were hard, and as the working men had not yet directly benefitted by the Reform Act of 1832, they were beginning to lose confidence in the Liberal party and in their own representatives in Parliament; and a section of them now commenced an active agitation in the hope of bringing about certain radical changes in the Constitution,

and an improvement in the condition of their class. With the help of a few Members of Parliament of extreme views, their leaders drew up a document which they called "The People's Charter," embodying the famous "six points" which they demanded. These were Universal Suffrage; Annual Parliaments; Vote by Ballot; Abolition of the property qualification for the election of Members of Parliament; Payment of Members; and the division of the country into equal electoral districts. The "Charter" became the rallying-point of the mass of discontent throughout the kingdom, producing serious division in the Liberal ranks, and keeping the country for many years in a state of political ferment. Its public advocates were for the most part able but violent partisans of their cause; and Mr. Feargus O'Connor, one of the principal Chartist leaders, delivered an inflammatory address in the Leicester Market Place as early as 1838. Mr. Henry Vincent also made several eloquent appeals in the New Hall at a somewhat later period.

The movement was soon taken up in Leicester, and was headed by Mr. Thomas Cooper, a man of great ability but hasty temper, which sometimes led him into trouble. A constant friction presently ensued between the local Chartists and Liberals; and the public meetings of the Free Traders were often disturbed by the persistent interruptions of the former, who were impatient of any motions or arguments not directly contributing to the interest of their faction.

A third element of discord and bitter feeling was added to the public life of Leicester at this time by the resistance offered by many Nonconformists to the enforced payment of Church Rates. In 1838 this grievance was first openly opposed; and upon the refusal of certain people to pay the

Resistance to payment of Church Rates.

rate, a portion of their goods was sold by auction in the Market Place.

This unhappy contention between the Nonconformists and the Vestries and Churchwardens empowered to proceed against defaulters in the Ecclesiastical Courts lasted for years in the case of St. Martin's parish, although this was the only one in the town in which the unwelcome rate was still enforced. Towards the close of the year 1840, from his repeated refusals to pay the Church Rates of this parish Mr. William Baines, a respected Nonconformist, was imprisoned in the County Gaol in this town for a period of eight months. Great indignation prevailed, and the Town Council drew up a memorial upon the subject for presentation to Parliament. This was followed by a public meeting in the Theatre, when resolutions were passed condemning the Church Rate system. On this occasion both of the Borough Members were present, and also the celebrated Irish orator Daniel O'Connell who, after a speech of great eloquence and humour, moved the resolution relating to the imprisonment of Mr. Baines.* He was released in July 1841, but the infliction of Church Rates was continued in the same parish until 1849, when the unpopular burden was finally removed.

Meanwhile, the agitation for the repeal of the Corn Laws continued. In 1843 a great meeting was held in the Theatre, presided over by Mr. Thomas Paget of Humberstone, when

* Mr. O'Connell drew a parallel between the present crisis and the old nursery rhyme beginning

"My little old woman and I fell out,
And this was what 'twas all about;
She had money, and I had none,
And this was how the trouble *begun*."

Mr. Richard Cobden was the principal speaker, supported by the leading Liberals of town and county. The meeting was marred by the noisy interruptions of a body of Chartists, much to the annoyance of the great Reform leader. During the proceedings an address signed by 4000 working men was presented to Mr. Cobden in appreciation of his labours for the improvement of their condition. A subscription for the Anti-Corn Law League was also opened, which soon afterwards amounted to £1000.

Mr. Cobden in Leicester.

Parliament, however, continued unwilling to legislate in the matter; and it was not until May 1846, when the terrible distress caused by the potato famine in Ireland during the previous year had impressed the Government with the absolute necessity of remedial measures, that the Corn Laws were finally repealed, and a constant source of privation removed from the life of the working classes.

The Corn-Laws repealed May, 1846.

During all this time the Chartists had been giving continual trouble. Their meetings, sometimes held in the Amphitheatre or the Shakesperian Rooms, spread discontent and excitement in the town; and in August 1842 an alarming street demonstration occurred. Hundreds of framework-knitters assembled in the Market Place, and afterwards paraded the town with a band and Chartist banners; and towards night matters became so threatening that the Riot Act was read and a troop of the Yeomanry Cavalry were called out, and quartered in the Inns near the Market Place to be ready for any emergency. The next morning the Chartists to the number of 1500 met in the Humberstone Gate and proceeded to Belgrave, armed with stones and bludgeons. The police, headed by their Superintendent Mr. Goodyer, and accompanied by the Yeomanry, followed, and

put the rioters to flight, charging them over the fields and ditches. This encounter was afterwards jestingly referred to as the "Battle of Mowmacre Hill." A few persons were arrested, but the leaders escaped.

Rivalry between the leaders of the local Chartist movement now split the body into factions, which rendered it less formidable; and much of its intemperate zeal was soon afterwards calmed by the enforced absence from Leicester of Mr. Cooper, who in 1843 was arrested and sentenced to two years' imprisonment in Stafford Gaol for having, while on a propagandist mission, incited the people of that town to serious violence. After his release he removed to London, and withdrew from active participation in the Chartist movement; but he continued to write addresses and pamphlets, and by the assistance of friends published his well-known poem composed during his imprisonment, entitled "The Purgatory of Suicides." He died in 1892.

The climax of the Chartist agitation was reached in 1848, a year of peculiar unrest in this country, and of revolution on the Continent. In February King Louis Philippe fled in disguise from the mob of Paris to seek refuge in England; and the spirit of revolt first manifested in the French capital quickly spread throughout Europe. Scarcely a single nation remained undisturbed, and England did not escape the general excitement. A revival of the Chartist movement agitated the whole kingdom; and a monster Petition in favour of the Charter, numerously signed in Leicester, and said to contain nearly six million names, was prepared for presentation to Parliament. It was arranged that on the 10th of April, after an imposing Meeting on Kennington Common, this Petition should be conveyed to the House of Commons by an

The Chartist rising of 1848.

immense procession of Chartists, with the intention of thus intimidating the Government into granting their demands. The announcement of this procession caused much public alarm, and it was forthwith forbidden by the authorities; but so threatening was the attitude of the Chartists that prompt and decisive measures were deemed necessary. At this crisis the safety of London was entrusted to the Duke of Wellington, who roughly fortified the Bank of England, and placed troops in ambuscade near the points where mischief was likely to arise on the appointed day. Special constables to the number of 150,000,—among whom was Prince Louis Napoleon, the future Emperor of the French, then quietly resident in London,—were sworn in to assist in keeping order.

In face of these defensive preparations the proposed demonstration shrank to comparatively small proportions. The assembly on Kennington Common did not number more than 50,000; and seeing no hope of effectively carrying out their intention, the leaders abandoned the proposed monster procession; and the Petition, in sections, was quietly conveyed in cabs to Westminster. Here it was formally received and reported upon, by order of the Government. The examination proved that the number of signatures had been grossly exaggerated, and that it abounded both in forged and fictitious names. The demonstration had failed; ultimate success seemed improbable; and the movement soon afterwards collapsed, not only in London, but in all parts of the kingdom. This was partly due to the subsidence of the revolutionary wave abroad, but more, probably, to the relieved condition of the working classes at home by the general improvement in trade which set in about this time.

The discontent among a section of the people in this town did not, however, disappear at once. On the 8th of May in the same year Feargus O'Connor paid another visit to Leicester, and was received at the Railway Station with great enthusiasm by his many local admirers. A carriage and four conveyed him to the Bell Hotel, where he addressed the assembled crowd from the roof of its portico; and in the evening a Meeting took place at the Amphitheatre, where he delivered an impassioned speech to a large audience, and called upon them to adhere to their demands and to stand fast by the Charter.*

Rioting in Leicester.

A week afterwards an alarming outbreak of disorder occurred, originating in the dissatisfied condition of the stone-breakers employed by the Poor Law Guardians.† The men refused to work on the terms offered, and began to parade the streets, joined by other malcontents and idle youths ready for any kind of mischief. The recent presence of Feargus O'Connor in Leicester had no doubt added to the spirit of lawlessness and resistance now manifested, and serious trouble being feared, a number of special constables from all classes of the townspeople were sworn in to assist in keeping the peace. The Mayor and magistrates remained

* This was probably the last occasion on which the Amphitheatre was used for a large public gathering, as the building was taken down later in the same year.

† In this connection it may be mentioned that the Workhouse in Sparkenhoe Street, superseding the old and much smaller one in the Humberstone Gate, the site of which is now partly occupied by the new Hay and Corn Market,—was built in 1847 from designs by Mr. Flint. Its contemplated erection gave rise to much comment and dissatisfaction on account of the size and costliness of the structure.

constantly at the Town Hall for consultation, and in readiness for any necessary action. For three days and nights from Monday the 5th May the town was kept in a state of excitement and alarm from the bands of rioters who marched through the streets, defying the police and magistrates who

EXTERIOR OF MAYOR'S PARLOUR
FROM THE OLD TOWN HALL YARD. (1906).

sought to keep order, and breaking windows and street lamps in all directions. Several times sharp fighting took place, the police and special constables under their energetic superintendent, Mr. Charters, using their truncheons freely upon

the stone-throwing mob, who formed and re-formed in a determined manner, but were more than once put to flight on the approach of the Pensioners with their glittering bayonets, under the command of Major Hawker. On the fourth evening, however, the rioting came to an end, mainly through the energetic action of Mr. Thomas Macaulay, surgeon and magistrate, who by a skilful manœuvre carried out by the police and specials acting with him, routed a large and threatening mob assembled on the Coal Hill, and dispersed them in all directions. No further attempts at resistance were made, and thus ended this unhappy struggle between a portion of the ignorant and poverty-stricken population of that time, and those in happier circumstances who, both officially and as law-abiding citizens themselves, claimed responsibility for the peace and order of the town. Quiet was restored, and it is satisfactory to record that no public disturbance of any moment has since taken place in Leicester.

During the same year of 1848 a local event occurred which for some months aroused much bitter party feeling. A Petition was lodged against the return of the two recently-elected Borough Members, Messrs. Walmsley and Gardner, on the ground of alleged bribery. On inquiry before a Committee of the House of Commons the offence was proved, and the two Members were unseated; Messrs. Richard Harris sen. and John Ellis being elected in their places.

But this year did not bring unrest and anxiety alone upon the town. More than one step was made in the direction of civic progress and well being. The disused Proprietary School on the New Walk was bought by the Corporation in 1848 for the very suitable purpose of a Town Museum; and the offer by the Literary and Philosophical Society of their

The Town Museum.

small collection of natural and interesting objects at the Mechanics' Institute, as the nucleus of a larger municipal one, was gratefully accepted. Much interest was excited by the acquisition for the town of so commodious and handsome a building, with its many possibilities of civic usefulness. The collection of curiosities was quickly added to, and it has since become, under the arrangement of its successive able curators, an important and valuable local Museum. It was also decided that the meetings of the Literary and Philosophical Society should be held in a new Lecture Hall adapted from two of the former class-rooms in the building; and this became the home of the Society for a fairly long period, many excellent lectures and lively and interesting discussions taking place within its walls.

The formal inauguration of the Museum took place on the 19th June 1849. After a lunch given at the Three Crowns Hotel by the President of the Society, Mr. Colin C. Macaulay, the guests adjourned to the Museum Building on the New Walk. Here a large assembly was already gathered, and the formal presentation of their collection by the Literary and Philosophical Society was made to the Mayor, Mr. William Biggs, who amid much applause received it on the part of the Corporation. Speeches and refreshments followed, and the occasion was regarded as one of special interest in the annals of the town.

The same day on which the Town Museum was opened is also to be remembered as that on which the first stone of the new Cemetery Buildings on the Knighton Hill was laid by the Mayor. The discontinuance of interments in the town graveyards had become a necessity for sanitary reasons; and the laying-out and planting of the new and beautifully

The Cemetery on the Knighton Hill.

situated burial ground, with its fine view of the town and Forest hills beyond, together with the progress of its elegant and dignified chapels, long formed a source of interest to the people of Leicester. The consecration of the Cemetery did not take place until the following year, 1850.

About this time a humane and necessary work was undertaken by the Corporation, mainly through the efforts and pecuniary assistance of Mr. Edward Shipley Ellis, in cutting down the crown of the hill on the Knighton Road just above the Cemetery Gates. This was now considerably lowered, lessening the labours both of horses and pedestrians; and the accomplishment of this important but unobtrusive public benefit deserves our grateful acknowledgement.

Another valuable boon was conferred upon the town soon afterwards, which was chiefly due to the wisdom and foresight of Mr. Joseph Whetstone, a member of the Corporation, and one of the most prominent and respected citizens of Leicester. In 1848 he brought forward a motion calling on the Town Council to take steps for the application to Leicester of the new Public Health Act. To the present generation it seems strange that special powers should have been necessary to enable a Corporation to deal with the health and cleanliness of its own borough. Mr. Whetstone's action, assisted by the high professional ability of the Town Clerk, Mr. Samuel Stone, resulted in the appointment of the first Local Board of Health, which has since, with extended powers from time to time, regulated all the sanitary arrangements of the town, and has framed the Bye Laws by which it is governed. Town drainage and fresh water supply were the first subjects to engage the attention of the new Local Board; and the thanks of Leicester are due to Mr. Whetstone, who spent his life and

Appointment of a Local Board of Health.

Mr. Joseph Whetstone.

energies in the service of the Borough as the pioneer in this direction of municipal work. He was, moreover, very careful of the public money, and cautious, perhaps to a fault, in recommending the necessary expenditure upon public improvements; but this was fully justified by the poverty of the town exchequer at the time. Mr. Whetstone died in 1868 from typhoid fever,—one of the evils of the unhealthy conditions he had laboured to remove. His solid judgment, uprightness of character, and self-denying work deserve lasting gratitude from those who now benefit by the sanitary measures he initiated.

The Biggs family.

Another name has often been mentioned in these pages,—that of the Biggs family, who were held in high estimation in this town in the middle of the nineteenth century. Four brothers, sons of a manufacturer, these were all men of great ability, public spirit, and individuality of character. Messrs. John and William Biggs, with their brother Joseph, carried on a large hosiery business in Belvoir Street, and were prominent in all movements relating both to political and local progress. The two first named were active town councillors. Mr. John Biggs, the eldest brother, was three times chosen Mayor of Leicester, and thrice elected Member of Parliament for this Borough. Out of regard for his public services the marble statue in Welford Place was raised to his memory. Mr. William Biggs became Member for Newport, Isle of Wight, besides also three times filling the civic chair of his native town. He subsequently removed to Liverpool, where some of his family still reside. Mr. Joseph and Mr. Thomas Biggs both left Leicester in middle life.

The Rt. Hon. Sir John Mellor.

A native of Leicester who became distinguished in the legal world was the late Sir John Mellor, one of the Judges

of the Queen's Bench. He was born in 1809, the son of Mr. John Mellor, a magistrate, and Mayor of Leicester in 1844. The younger John Mellor was educated first at the Grammar School, and afterwards at that of the Rev. Charles Berry. He studied for the Law in an attorney's office in Leicester,—was called to the Bar in 1833,—and practised on the Midland Circuit for many years, becoming Queen's Counsel in 1851. From 1855 to 1861 he held the office of Recorder of this town, during which time he also sat in Parliament for the borough of Great Yarmouth, and afterwards of Nottingham. In 1861 he received the honour of knighthood on being promoted to the position of one of Her Majesty's Judges, from which he retired in 1879, and was then admitted to the Privy Council. A fine portrait of Sir John Mellor in full judicial robes is now an ornament to the walls of the Crown Court of the Leicester Town Hall, and a gratifying memento of his connection with our ancient borough.

The Rt. Hon. Anthony J. Mundella.

As an instance of native ability and force of character which enabled their possessor to rise by his own efforts to a high political and social position, the Right Hon. Anthony J. Mundella next claims our notice. His father was a young Italian sent to England by his parents early in the century to avoid the army conscription then rigidly enforced in his own country. He settled and married in Leicester, and his son Anthony, born in 1825, was apprenticed at a very early age to the hosiery trade, the intelligence and energy he showed in his work marking him out for rapid advancement. His keen desire for self-improvement led him to use every opportunity for acquiring knowledge; and his brightness and promise early attracted the notice of a Nottingham manufacturer, his senior in years, with whom he entered into

partnership in 1848, and left Leicester to settle in Nottingham, being then only twenty-three years of age. There he soon became a useful citizen; and at thirty was serving on the Town Council, and occupying the honourable post of Sheriff of Nottingham. From early boyhood the study of social politics, from an advanced Liberal standpoint, was his ruling passion; and having quickly acquired a competency by his industry and business talent, he was able to retire in early middle life and to devote himself entirely to the public service. He was greatly interested in the relations of capital and labour; and his success in forming a Board of Conciliation in the Nottingham glove and hosiery trade led to an invitation from Sheffield to contest the seat in Parliament then held by Mr. Arthur Roebuck. This he gained, and continued to represent the same constituency until his death nearly thirty years afterwards. During his public career his interests and activities were widespread, but his most valuable services were given in the cause of elementary education and the settlement of labour disputes by arbitration. Under Mr. Gladstone's Government in 1880 he was appointed Vice-president of the Committee of Council for Education, and a Privy Councillor; and six years later he entered the Cabinet as President of the Board of Trade. His energy, grasp, and devotion to the public service, added to his high intelligence and cultivation of mind secured him the friendship and confidence not only of the leaders of the Liberal party, but of many of his political opponents, and other distinguished representatives of Art, Science, and Literature. Mr. Mundella died in 1897.

A strong personality in the town during the middle of the last century, and greatly admired as a preacher and public

The Rev. James F. Mursell.

speaker, was the Rev. James Filippo Mursell, who began his long ministry of over fifty years in this town as the immediate successor of the Rev. Robert Hall, at the Harvey Lane Chapel, in 1826. From thence he removed with his congregation to the new Baptist Chapel in Belvoir Street in 1845. In addition to his powerful pulpit utterances, Mr. Mursell took an able and prominent part in the advocacy of all political movements relating to Reform, and was active in the championship of Dissent against the claims of the Established Church. He resigned his long pastorate of the Belvoir Street Chapel in 1876, and died in 1885.

Mr. John Flower.

Mr. James Thompson.

Two men well-known in Leicester towards the middle of the last century, who greatly contributed to the preservation of its past memories and features, were Mr. John Flower, artist and teacher of drawing, to whose clever pencil we owe many picturesque sketches of its old streets and buildings, since altered or removed,—and Mr. James Thompson, who followed his father as editor and proprietor of the Leicester *Chronicle;* and whose excellent History of Leicester, published in 1849, has been of untold service in perpetuating the events of its ancient life. Following these with the same devotion to its past history, but long outliving the limit of our period, may be mentioned with warm appreciation the late Mr. William Kelly, an antiquarian who also attained high rank as a Freemason, and whose researches have brought to light many details of the corporate life and customs of the mediæval borough; —Mr. William Napier Reeve who, though not a native of Leicester, threw himself with characteristic enthusiasm into all that concerned its ancient history and ceremonial, and whose "Chronicles of the Castle and of the Earls of Leicester" supplies delightful reading; the late

Mr. Thomas North, author of the interesting "Chronicle of the Church of St. Martin," the "Church Bells of Leicestershire." and other valuable contributions to the archæology of the district;—the late Mr. Stockdale Hardy and Mr. William Jackson, both ardent antiquarians who have added to the store of local historical knowledge; the late Mr. George and Mr. Thomas Nevinson, whose love of archæology prompted their ever active and generous assistance in preserving venerable buildings and objects of interest in the town,—and the late Messrs. John and Thomas Spencer, who were also genuine lovers of Leicester and its history, and to whose energy and enthusiasm, especially that of the elder brother, is owing the preservation in an enduring form, of many of its ancient features and customs. May it not reasonably be hoped that the same interest in the past life of Leicester will be continued among its present citizens and handed on, together with a practical desire to improve its conditions and to beautify its aspects, to future generations of dwellers in this ancient town?

We have now glanced at some of the local events and features of the first half of the nineteenth century, and here a fitting termination of our short review suggests itself,—not only from the obviously convenient division of time, but because an event of deep national importance then occurred,—the opening of the great Exhibition of 1851, which may be regarded as a very real dividing line between the Old and the New,—between comparatively obsolete and modern conditions of living. The competition of nations and towns in the peaceful arts and industries which this Exhibition brought about; the innovations and improvements which have resulted in every department of civilised life, have largely

transformed the whole social system since the year 1850, and have proportionately affected the growth and development of our own town of Leicester. The very application of iron and glass in the construction of the Exhibition Building itself, (afterwards removed to Sydenham and re-opened, much enlarged, as the Crystal Palace,) marked a revolution in scientific structure for covering large areas which has since formed the basis for the same and kindred purposes all the world over. The name of Sir Joseph Paxton will be handed down as the practical agent for carrying out the wide and beneficent aim of Albert, Prince Consort of Queen Victoria, to whom this great scheme for furthering the interests of Art and Commerce is mainly due. It is certain, however, that its accomplishment was rendered possible only by the rapid strides then making in the development of railroad and steamboat communication; and thus the famous engineers of the first half of the nineteenth and the latter part of the eighteenth centuries may claim to have been the pioneers of most of the marvellous advantages and facilities which we now enjoy.

Having advanced as far as this dividing line which imagination draws across the past century, and beyond which it is obviously both rash and premature to venture, this short sketch may properly conclude.

THE END.

INDEX.

A

Abbey of Leicester, The 55-63, 103, 154-158
,, Bells, The - 125
,, Granges, The - 56
,, Mansion, The - 210, 226
Abbots of Leicester - 59
Adelphi Society, The - 316
Alianor, The Countess 71, 72
All Saints' Church 120, 133, 278
Amicia, The Countess - 63
Amphitheatre, The - 403, 419
Angel Inn, The - 190
,, Mr. John (Town Preacher) 180
Anne of Denmark, Queen 199-201
Archery - - 114
Armada, The Spanish - 182
Arms, The Borough - 69
Arnold, Dr. - - 305, 364
,, Family, The - 349
Assembly Rooms, The County 307, 402
,, ,, The Haymarket, 234, 262, 300, 401
Astley's Circus - 291
Athenæum, The - 399
Augustine Priory, The 75
Aylestone Manor House, The 216

B

Balloon, The first seen in Leicester 313
"Barn, The Old" - 142, 250
Barrel, or Bear Hill Cross, The 186, 193
Bath Gardens, The (or Vauxhall) 287, 291, 306
Bavaria, William, Duke of 91, 95
Bear-baiting in Leicester 186
Beaumont or Bellomont, Earl Robert, 45, 52-54
Bell-founders in Leicester 123
Bells in Leicester Churches 123
Bent's Hospital - 195
Berry, The Rev. Charles 358
Biggs family, The - 427
Birds' Nest Farm, The 101
Bishop Totta or Torthelm 33
Bishop's Fee, The - 33-52
Bishoppe's Ffarme, The 33, 37
Black Annis's Bower Close, The 319
Blanche of Lancaster, The Lady 93, 105
Blanchmains, Earl Robert 65
Blue Boar Inn, The - 147, 243
Bolingbroke, Henry of 96, 104-108
Borough Arms, The - 69
,, Incorporation of the 181
Boroughs, The Five - 36
Bossu, Earl Robert - 55
Battle of Bosworth, The 147
Bouchier, John. Abbot - 156
Bow Bridge, The 13, 112, 147, 275
,, ,, The Little 274
Bowling Green, The - 236
Bradgate - - 160, 210
Brickfields, brickmaking in Leicester 60, 291
Bridewells, The Town and Connty 302
Brigge Silver, The - 54, 62, 73
British School, The - 386
,, Roads - - 7
Bruntingthorpe or Bronkinsthorpe 367
Bull-baiting in Leicester 189
Bunyan, John, in Leicester 226, 249
Burnaby Family, The - 263
,, Archdeacon - 267
Butchers' Shambles, The 276
Butt Close, The - 117
,, ,, Lane - 412

C

Cage, The - - 193
Canal, The Leicester - 306
Cank Street - - 192
,, Well - - 192
Carey, Dr. - - 311
Carte, Dr. Samuel - 117, 209
Cart's Lane - - 209
Carter, Baron - - (note) 296
Castle, Leicester 38, 40, 44, 47, 69, 71, 79, 81, 83, 90, 94, 96, 134-137, 143, 144, 146, 208, 268
Catch club, St. Margaret's 262
Cattle Fairs and Markets 252
Cavendish, Mr. - 157
,, Mansion, The 158, 210
Cemetery on the Knighton Hill 425
Chamberlains, The Town 114
Chantry House of the Corpus Christi Guild 127, 179
Chapel Close, The - 260
Chapels, Wayside - 125
Charles I. in Leicester 205-210, 225-227
Charter, The Great - 80
Chartist Movement, The 416, 419-424
,, Petition, The - 420
,, Riots in Leicester 423
Charyte, Prior William 59
Chaucer, Geoffry - 100
Cherry Orchard, Roman mosaics found in the 20
Chimney sweeps - 413
Christianity, Early, in Leicester 33, 38
Church-rate agitation, The local 417, 418
,, organs in Leicester 264
Clement's Church, St. - 74, 113
Clock Tower, The Memorial 277
Clowne, The Abbot 59
Coaches, Stage 239-241, 413
Cobden, Mr. Richard, in Leicester 419
Coal Hill, The 234, 300, 424
Cock-fighting in Leicester 189
,, Pits, The 189, 236, 330
,, Muck Hill Houses, The (note) 75, 272
Collegiate Church of the Newarke, The, 84, 85, 89, 90, 92, 93, 94, 104, 105, 106, 148, 154, 158
Collegiate School, The 388-390
Coltman, Mr. John 250, 296, 312
,, ,, ,, (note) 312
Concerts, early Subscription 263
,, ,, in the New Hall 368
Conduit, The 192, 252, 408
Confrater's House, Wigston Hospital 274
Consanguinitarium, The 308
Constables, The Town 300
Constance, The Duchess 96, 101, 104, 106
Cook, Mr. Thomas - 405
Cooper ,, ,, - 417, 420
Corn-Law agitation, The 415, 418, 419
Cornwall, The - 191
Corporation, The Old - 374
,, ,, New 378-382, 392
,, Sale, The 381
County School, The - 385
Cowhay, The - - 73, 111
Cradock, Mr. Joseph, of Gumley 262, 270, 295, 314-316
Cricket Ground, The - 374, 400
Cromwell, Oliver - 227
Crouchback, Earl Edmund 79

D

Dancing Assemblies in Leicester 234, 235
Dane Hills, The - 9, 37, 319
,, ,, Quarries, The 53
Danes, The - - 36
Danet's Hall - - 20, 365
Dare, The Rev. Joseph 387
Devon, William, Earl of 206
,, Dowager Countess of 209
Dog-carts - - 413
Dominican Friars, The 113
Dorset, Marchioness of 161
,, Marquis of - 160
Ducking Stool, The - 194
Duke, "The Good" - 93
Dukes of Lancaster, The 92-108

E

Earls of Leicester, The 45-92
,, ,, Lancaster. The 79-92
Earl Shilton, Castle of. The 101
East Gate, The - 9, 10, 109
Easter Monday Hunt, The 319
Edward I. King - 117
,, II. ,, - 81
,, III, ,, - 83, 90
,, IV. ,, - 145
,, VI. ,, - 158, 159
Edwin, Last Saxon Earl 39
Eleanor, Queen - 65
Elections, Riotous Parliamentary 299, 373
Electric Telegraph, The 407
Elizabeth, Queen - 175
Ella, Mr. John - 369
Ellis, Mr. Edward Shipley 414, 426
Elm Tree in the Market Place, The 242
Ely Place, Holborn - 105
Ethelfleda, Queen - 38, 66
Evesham, Battle of - 72
Exchange, The Town 191, 233, 300

F

Fairfax, General - 136
Fairs in Leicester - 74, 81, 93
,, Proclamation of the 318
Feargus O'Connor - 417, 422
Feasts, Town - 235
"Fermerie, La" - 141
Festival, The Leicester Musical 363
Fitz-Parnell, Earl Robert 68
Five Boroughs, The - 36
Floggings, Public - 305
Floods in Leicester - 408
Flower, Mr. John - 430
"Flys" introduced - 259
Foot pavements introduced 274
Forest, The - - 35, 53
,, of Leicester, Enclosure of the 204
Fortifications of Leicester in 1645 213
Forum, The Roman - 16
Fosse Road, The - 12, 13
Framework-knitters, The 283, 327, 334
Franklin, Mr. - 392
Free Grammar School, The 170-174, 285, 388-390
Freemen's Common, The 248
French Prisoners in Leicester 291
Friars, The arrival of the 74

G

Gabel Pence, The - 46, 62, 73
Gainsborough, The - 191, 233
Gallows Field, The - 111
Gallowtree Hill, The - 103
Gaol in Leicester, the first 79
,, the Borough - 301, 302
,, ,, County - 302
,, ,, New County 302, 363
Gardener's Cottage, The 167
Gartree Street, The - 14
Gardiner, Mr. William 313, 351-358
Gates, The Town 9, 109, 111, 271
Gaunt, John of - 96-106
George, Riding of the - 128
Geryn, William - 59
Glass, Painted, in Highcross Street 119
Godiva, The Lady, at Leicester 39
Goldsmith's Grave, The 100
Goltre Gate, The - 190
Gopsall Hall - 269, 393
Grange, The Castle - 92
Granges, The Abbey - 56
Great Meeting Chapel 100, 110, 232, 329
,, ,, Day School 383
,, ,, Sunday ,, 292
Greatorex, Miss - (note) 264
Grentmesnil, Hugh de -. 44-45
Grey Friars Monastery 148
Grey, Lady Jane - 160, 161
,, Family, The - 145, 160
Griffin, The (Borough Arms) 69
Grosstête, Bishop - 70, 77
Guild of Corpus Christi 118, 126, 159
,, St. George - 128
,, Merchant, The 36, 47, 68, 114
,, ,, Hall of the 148. 226
Guilds, the Religious 126, 128-129, 159

H

Hadrian, The Emperor 23
Halford, Sir Henry - 346
Hall, The Rev. Robert 340
Handel, The Composer 269
Hangman's Lane - 261
Hardy, Mr. Wm. Stockdale 431
Harvey Lane Chapel - 311, 340
Hastings, The Family of 145, 165, 205, 211
Haymarket, The - 234
,, ,, Assembly Room 234
Henrietta Maria, Queen 205
Henry I. King - - 45
,, II. ,, - - 114
,, III. ,, - - 71
,, IV. ,, Bolingbroke 96, 105, 106, 107
,, VI. ,, - - 144, 145
,, VII. ,, - - 147
,, VIII. ,, - - 151, 160
Hereford, Earl of (Bolingbroke) 104
,, Countess of - 104
Hermitage, The - 126
Heselrigge, Sir Arthur 205, 214
High Cross, The 16, 103, 112, 192, 224, 225, 272, 273
,, ,, Street 14, 15, 112, 113, 119
High Street - - 112, 224
Hill, Dr. - - 305
Holt or Hot Gate, The 112
Holy Bones, The - 17, 385
Hollings, Mr. James Francis 391
Horse Fair Leys, The - 191, 207
Horsepool, The - 276
Horse Racing, Early, in Leicester 236
Hosiery Trade, The - 333-335
Hospital of St. John the Baptist 76, 194, 195
,, Bent's - 194, 195
Howard, Mr. John - 301
Huntingdon, Earl of 165, 180, 205

I

Incorporation of the Borough 181
Infirmary, The 259-269, 305, 364
,, early Anniversary Services 263
Inns in Leicester 161, 190, 241
Isabella, Queen - 81, 83

J

Jackson, Mr. William - 431
James I. King, in Leicester 202-204
Jewry Wall, The - 10
Jews in Leicester in the Middle Ages 77
John of Gaunt 85, 93, 95, 97, 105, 106, 118
,, of Gaunt's "Cellar" 80
,, of Gaunt's "Summer House" 101
John, King - - 69
John's Stone, St. - 5
Journal, The Leicester 237
Jubilee of King George III. 328
Julius Agricola - 8, 9
Juvenile Players, The - 184

K

Keep of the Castle, Norman 48
Kelly, Mr. William, senr. 285
,, ,, ,,, Antiquarian and Freemason 430
King Richard's Road - 365
Kirby Frith Hall - 175, 176
Knighton, Henry de - 59

L

Lambert, Daniel - 311
Lancaster, Earls of - 79-92
,, Dukes of - 92-108
Latimer, Hugh - 160
Lear, King - - 4
Leir, The river - - 4
Leofric, Earl of Leicester and Coventry 39
Leonard's Church, St. - 126, 216
Library, The Town - 179
,, The Permanent 317, 398
Linwood, Miss - 340
Literary and Philosophical Society The 396
London Road, The - 238
"Lord's Place" 166-169, 208
Luddites, The - 334
Ludlam, the Rev. William 313
Lunatic Asylums in Leicester 305

M

Mace, The Corporation 225, 381
Magazine or Newarke Gateway, The 84, 206, 209
Magistrates, first appointment of 145
,, Borough, in 1836 378
Malibran, Madame, in Leicester 368
Margaret's Church, St. 33, 52, 61, 98, 99, 120, 130, 218, 263-264, 342, 363
Market Place, The 112, 190. 191, 276, 408
,, The Saturday 99, 112
,, ,, Wednesday 112, 193
Martin's Church, St. 16, 118, 125, 126, 128, 158, 164, 180, 205, 208, 224, 233, 255, 261, 264, 269, 328, 349, 370, 393
Mary's Church, St. 38, 40, 47, 51, 103, 111, 117, 129, 144
Mary de Bohun - - 105
,, Queen - - 159, 160
,, ,, of Scots - 169
Matilda, the Anchoress 99
Maude, of Lancaster, The Lady 91
Mayor of Leicester, The first 68
Mayor's Feast, The - 235
,, Parlour, The 176-179, 218
Mechanics' Institute, The 370
Mellor, Sir John - 427
Merchant Guild, The - 68
Mercia - - 32
Meulan, Robert de (or Robert de Beaumont or Bellomont) 45-54
Michael's Church, St. 34, 43, 66, 76, 133
Midland Railway, The 404
Milestone, The Roman 23, 272
Military Force of Leicester in 1583 182
Militia Officers, Entertainment by 288
Minstrels, Court of the 102
Mint, Royal, in Leicester 39
Miracle Plays - - 125-164
Moot Hall, The Ancient 68
Mount, The 4, 44, 47, 80
Mowmacre Hill, "Battle of" 420
Mud-walls remaining - 412
Mulberry-trees planted - 274
Mundella, The Right Hon. A. J. 427
Mursell, The Rev. James F. 429
Museum, The Town - 424

N

Napoleon Bonaparte - 336
Nevinson, Mr. George and Mr. Thomas 52, 431
Newarke, The 84-90, 213, 216-223
,, ,, Wall - 227
Newspaper Advertisements 329-331
News Room, The General 398
Newton, Alderman Gabriel 277
,, Alderman's School 383
New Hall, The - 367
,, Walk, ,, - 292
Nicholas' Church, St. 34, 120, 152, 393
,, Street, ,, - 112
Nichols, Mr, John, The Historian 350
Nicholson Family, The 369
,, Mr. Henry - 368, 404
Noble, Dr. - - 20. 365
North Bridge, The 58, 111, 216
,, Gate, The 109, 146, 200
,, Wall, The - 110
,, Mr. Thomas - 430

O

Obituary Notices - 331
Old Barn, The - 142, 250
Ordeal of Battle, The - 46
Organists, Lady, in Leicester 370
Ostorius Scapula - 7

P

Pack-horse Inn, The . 75
Parchment Lane - 255
Pares's Bank, Messrs. - 257
Paris, Matthew - 65
Parliament, Meetings of, in Leicester 141, 143, 144, 145
,, House, The 142

Peace Procession in 1763, The 255, 256
Penny Post established 406
,, John, Abbot - 60
Permanent Library, The 317, 398
Peter's Church, St. 34, 43, 99, 125, 133, 167, 171
Petronilla, The Countess 56
Pexall, Ralph, Abbot - 155
Philippa, Queen - 90
Phillips, Mr. Richard 316-318
Philosophical Society, The 316
Phipps's Field - 291
Pigeon Tree, The - 242
Pillory, The - 193
Pinfolds in Leicester - 190, 276
Plague, The 94, 96, 113, 202
Players, The Queen's - 184
Plays in the Old Town Hall 184
"Plough Monday" - 415
Police Force established in Leicester 412
Poll-tax Rebellion, The 102
Population of Leicester 43, 112, 322
Porter's Lodge to the Castle, The 131
,, ,, Lord's Place, The 166
Portmanmote, The - 46, 80
Post Offices in Leicester 406
"Potation," The - 285
Preacher, The Town - 180
Pretender, The Young - 312
Priestley, Dr. - - 312
Prisoners, French, in Leicester 251, 291
,, Treatment of Civil 302
Proclaiming the Fair - 318
Proprietary School, The 391, 392
Pumps, The Town - 251

R

Race Course, The - 73, 236
,, Week, The - - 402
,, Balls ,, - 307, 402
Railway, the Leicester and Swannington 371
,, Midland - - 404
Ratæ Coritanorum - 6, 8, 9
Ratby, Camp at - 6
Raw Dykes, The - 5, 207, 216
Rebellion of 1745, The 232
Recorder, The Borough, first appointed 145
Reeve, Mr. W. Napier 78, 107, 430
Reform Movement, The 372
,, Bill, the Municipal 378
Repington, Philip de - 59
Revolution Club, The - 299
Richard Cœur de Lion 69
,, II. King - 97, 102
,, III. ,, 146-148, 158
Riding of the George 128, 143, 144
Roads, British - 7, 12
,, Roman - 12-15
,, London, The - 238
,, Welford, ,, - 238
,, Turnpike - 237
Robert de Beaumont, Earl of Leicester 45-54
,, Bossu - 55
,, Blanchmains 65
,, Fitz-Parnel - 68
Robinson, the Rev. Thomas 350
Roman Camp at Leicester 7, 8
,, Catholic Chapels 307
,, Government in Leicester 24
,, Milestone ,, 23
,, Pavements ,, 20
,, Temples ,, 16, 17
,, Walls and Gates ,, 9, 22
Rupert, Prince 210, 211, 218-221
Rupert's Tower - 228

S

Saint Clement's Church 74
,, "Crosse" - 118
,, George's Church 360
,, James' Chapel - 125
,, John the Baptist's Chapel 125
,, John's Stone - 5
,, Leonard's Church 126, 216
,, Margaret's ,, (*see* Margaret)
,, Martin's ,, (*see* Martin)
,, Mary's ,, (*see* Mary)
,, ,, Field - 236
,, Michael's Church (*see* Michael)
,, Nicholas' ,, (*see* Nicholas)
,, Peter's ,, (*see* Peter)
,, Sepulchre's ,, 76, 111, 125
,, Sunday's Bridge - 111
Sanvey Gate - 80, 133

Savoy Palace, The - 100, 102
Schools in Leicester - 383-392
,, Alderman Newton's 281, 383
,, British, The - 386
School, Collegiate, The 388-390
,, Great Meeting 383
Schools, Parochial - 383.385
School, Proprietary, The 391, 392
Shakesperian Rooms, The 403
Shambles, The - 276
,, Lane - 112, 277
Sieges of Leicester 65, 213-228
Simon de Montfort 70-73, 77, 277
Skating introduced into Leicester 292
"Smoke Farthing," The 120
South Fields, The 73, 111, 245-248
,, Gate, The - 9, 109
Spa, The Leicester - (note) 400
Spencer, Messrs. John and Thomas 431
Spital, The 75, 98, 125
Stamford, Earl of - 206
Stocking Frame, The - 283
,, Wood, The - 58
Stocks, The Town - 193, 243
Sunday Schools established in Leicester 292
Swines' Market, The - 112
Swynderby, William - 98

T

"Tabernacle," The - 250
Theatre, The Old - 401
,, Royal - 401
Thompson, Mr. James 430
Throsby, Mr. John . 351
Town Hall, The 176-179, 183, 184, 189
,, Library, The - 179, 180
,, Preacher, The - 180
Trinity Guild, The - 129
,, or "New" Hospital 84
85-89, 105, 129, 152
Thomas, Earl of Lancaster and Leicester - 81, 82
Totta, Bishop - 33
Turnpike Roads - 237
Turret Gateway of the Newarke 135, 136

V

Valentine Family, The 256
Via Devana, The - 14, 295
Victoria Park, The - 73
,, Queen, in Leicester 394
Vaughan Family, The 345-349
Vauxhall Gardens, The 287-307

W

Waits, The Town - 185
Wall, The Jewry - 10
Walls, The Town 9, 65, 109, 110
Wards, The Town first divided into 145
Wat Tyler's Rebellion 102
Watchmen, The Town 300, 412
Watling Street, The - 7 12
Watts' Causeway 20, 275, 365
,, Dr. of Medbourne 275
,, Miss Susannah - 365
Wayside Chapels - 125
Waytestaffe, Priest - 98, 99
Wells, The Town - 192
Wesley, John, in Leicester 250
West Bridge, The - 52, 75, 408
,, Gate, The 10, 111, 147
"Westcotes" - 366
,, Grange - 56, 59
Whetstone, senr., Mr. - 296
,, Mr. Joseph 426
Whipping Toms, The - 320
Whit-Monday Procession, The 130
White, Sir Thomas 161, 277
,, Horse Inn, The 148
,, Apron Fair, The 282
Wigston, William 150-154, 277
Wigston's Chantry - 153
,, Hospital - 150
William of Bavaria, Duke 91, 95
Window-tax repealed - 411
Witchcraft - - 203
Wolsey, Cardinal - 154
Wood-gate, The - 54
Wool-hall, The 66, 76, 194, 195
,, Trade, The - 74, 114
Worsted spinning 296, 299, 333
Wycliffe, John 97, 102, 103
Wyggeston Boys' School, The 389
Wyvern, The - 69

LEICESTER:
PRINTED BY CLARKE & SATCHELL, 5 GALLOWTREE GATE